Aalto University
School of Business

Heroes made here

An analysis of rhetoric devices in Les Mills advertising

MSc program in Corporate Communication

Master's thesis

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Abstract of master's thesis

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Abstract

Objective of the study: The purpose of this study is to examine the types of rhetorical devices that are used to persuade consumers to attend Les Mills group fitness classes and prefer the brand over other standardized group fitness classes. The objective is not to identify different types of rhetoric devices that are being used, but to examine what is being done with these representations and how they might correlate with the current fitness discourse. As rhetoric devices can always be interpreted in various ways and arguments are bound to be subjected to the addressee's individual evaluation, this study will also evaluate the possible counterarguments and criticism the constructed message may face.

Research method: The methodology used is based on rhetorical analysis, which resides in the field of discourse analysis. In rhetorical discourse analysis, the processes of producing meanings are analyzed: how the meanings are constructed as convincing and desirable versions of reality and how the audience is persuaded to commit to those versions. As rhetorical discourse analysis is based on the interpretative nature of reality, there is no unambiguous way of knowing what sorts of attitudes an actor producing meanings has towards the reality. Therefore, the purpose of this study is not to find out what the proposed meaning of the advertisements is as such, but rather through the arguments that are being made for the subject.

Although rhetorical analysis is often seen as a subordinate to discourse analysis, this study addresses discourse also as a tool of rhetoric. The prevalent fitness discourse is suggested to have so much importance that it in itself can be used as an underlying means for persuading audiences.

Findings: Four common themes among rhetorical devices were identified: metaphors, quantification, categorization and narratives. These findings were then paired with the findings of Smith Maguire (2002) on recurring themes within the fitness industry discourse: the dilemma of exercise as hard work versus leisure, fitness as a lifestyle choice, fitness as a source for calculable rewards and motivational dilemma. It is suggested that metaphors are linked with the dilemma of viewing exercise as either work or leisure, whereas quantification attends both the motivational dilemma and considering fitness as a source for calculable rewards. Categorization addresses mostly the motivational dilemma and narratives are linked with viewing fitness as a lifestyle choice.

Keywords advertising, organizational communication, fitness industry, rhetoric, rhetorical discourse analysis

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Tiivistelmä

Tutkimuksen tavoitteet: Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on tarkastella retorisia keinoja, joita käytetään Les Millsin ryhmäliikuntatuntien mainonnassa kuluttajien vakuuttamiseksi tuntien ja brändin laadusta. Tarkoituksena ei ole niinkään identifioida kaikkia mainoksissa esiintyviä retoriikan keinoja, vaan pikemminkin tutkia, mitä keinojen avulla pyritään mahdollisesti saavuttamaan ja kuinka keinot suhteutuvat vallitsevaan fitness-diskurssiin. Koska retoriset keinot voidaan aina tulkita useilla eri tavoilla, on tutkimuksen puitteissa tarpeen myös huomioida, millaisia vastaväitteitä tai kritiikkiä mainokset voivat saada osakseen.

Tutkimusmenetelmä: Tutkimus nojautuu retoriseen analyysiin, joka kuuluu diskurssianalyysin piiriin. Retorisessa diskurssianalyysissa tarkastellaan merkitysten tuottamista: kuinka merkityksiä rakennetaan vakuuttaviksi ja tavoiteltaviksi versioiksi todellisuudesta ja kuinka yleisö saadaan sitoutumaan rakennettuun versioon. Retorinen diskurssianalyysi perustuu todellisuuden tulkinnalliseen luonteeseen, eikä tutkimuksessa siksi oteta kantaa siihen, millaiset asenteet tai ajatukset ohjaavat viestijän tuottamaa näkemystä todellisuudesta. Sen sijaan tutkimuksessa pyritään löytämään niitä argumentteja, joita viestijä esittää ja erittelemään mahdollisia tulkintoja argumentin tueksi retorisin keinoin esitetyistä perusteluista.

Retorinen analyysi nähdään usein alisteisena diskurssianalyysille, mutta tässä tutkimuksessa diskurssia käsitellään myös retorisena keinona. Vallitsevaa fitness-diskurssia pidetään siinä määrin merkittävänä, että sen itsessään voidaan myös katsoa olevan taustatekijänä erilaisten retoristen keinojen käyttämiselle.

Tulokset: Analyysin perusteella esiin nousi neljä keskeistä retoriikan keinoa: metaforat, kvantifikaatio, kategorisointi sekä narratiivit. Löydöksiä verrattiin Smith Maguiren (2002) huomioihin fitness-diskurssin toistuvista keskeisistä teemoista: kovan työn ja vapaa-ajan välinen dilemma, fitness elämäntapavalintana, fitness mitattavien saavutusten lähteenä sekä fitness motivaatiodilemmana. Löydetyistä retorisista keinoista metaforat linkittyvät työn ja vapaa-ajan dilemmaan, kun taas kvantifikaatio pureutuu sekä motivointihaasteisiin että mitattavien saavutusten kommunoikointiin. Kategorisaation avulla käsitellään motivointidilemmaa, narratiivit taas linkittyvät fitnessiin elämäntapavalintana.

Avainsanat mainonta, yritysviestintä, liikunta-ala, retoriikka, retorinen diskurssianalyysi

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1 Physical fitness as a business – an introduction

Having worked as a group fitness instructor for several years, I have witnessed a rather rapid rise in the popularity of standardized and branded group exercise classes in Finland. While it seemed that in the early 2000's there were barely a few of these classes available – Les Mills BODYPUMP being one of them – the number of different branded programs offered by health clubs has skyrocketed in the past five to ten years. While Les Mills International has created a notable number of these programs, contenders such as Zumba Fitness and Piloxing have also packed classes throughout the world.

The idea for this study was gradually built on discussions with fellow group fitness instructors. We often wondered what in fact made many consumers prefer branded classes over non-branded ones and why some of them kept going to the same classes – despite the fact that the standardized classes pretty much stay the same year after year. In its very essence, a spinning class, for example, has a limited number of possible movements one can perform with the bike. All of these movements can be done both in a branded class and in a non-branded one: the movements are rather pre-choreographed by the technical and physiological limitations of the bikes, facilities and the human body. However, according to many clubs' data, branded classes still outperformed many of the freestyle classes, when participation rates were measured.

From the standpoint of the companies distributing and marketing these standardized and branded classes, the benefit of doing so seems fairly clear. Companies such as Les Mills and Zumba Fitness have found a way to globally distribute the types of intangible services which traditionally would seem rather non-tradable. Licensing and franchising are successful mechanisms for international expansion of service-based companies, but often these sorts of services include tangible products as well which help consumers evaluate the quality of the whole service (think of Burger King or Hertz, for example). In the case of branded group fitness classes, however, the whole service is fully intangible and the consumer has no physical evidence of the quality of the service. Moreover, whether the consumer attends branded or non-branded classes, both are still highly dependent on

self-service: the consumer has to do the exercising herself to gain any beneficial results. So the big question is this: how do the consumers ”know” to prefer the branded classes?

My initial assumption was that the same things apply for fitness class brands as other brands: when you create a brand that is strong in communicating and representing values that are important to a group of consumers, this group will consume the product. However, fitness classes are not the type of services you can easily consume. There's a lot of effort involved in attending the class: you need to take the time to attend one in a specific location at a specific time, and what's more, you need to put in a considerable amount of effort to perform during the class – all this just to receive the service once, not to mention several times a month to actually gain most of the benefits. Moreover, as Parviainen (2011, 527) notes, the benefit of standardization of group fitness is not simply in controlling and regulating movements, but also in creating exciting and pleasurable experiences. So perhaps the process of branding fitness classes was actually a more multifaceted task, thus making it a very interesting topic for further studying.

1.1 The premises for this study

According to the statistics of the International Health, Racquet & Sports Club Association (IHRSA), there were approximately 900 health and fitness clubs with 680 000 active customers in Finland in 2015. Globally speaking, last year over 150 million people exercised in more than 180 000 clubs, generating a total profit of over 80 billion dollars (approximately 71 billion euros). While the U.S. dominates the market both in the amount of fitness clubs and club members, the industry is doing well all over the world as people in South America, Europe, Middle East and Asia are increasingly adapting fitness facilities as one of their preferred locations for bodily exercise. Although there is still room to grow for example in the regions of North Africa, it seems legitimate to state that health and fitness clubs have grown into a remarkable global industry.

While the industry is growing all around the world, it is also gradually becoming more and more globalized, both in terms of body ideals, body techniques and philosophies of the body (Johansson & Andreasson 2016, 144). Not only has the toned body become an icon

of the modern Westernized culture, so have the sites where such body is produced on. While the aerobics movement dominated the 1980's, the variety of classes offered has since spread wide across different types of sports that are being taught in a group fitness form. This has not gone unnoticed by operators in the industry: companies are now increasingly capitalizing by creating pre-choreographed group fitness classes that standardize the experience for the consumers. In another words, a branded dance class, for example, looks pretty much the same whether it's being taught in China or Finland.

The standardization of bodily movement is a not new trend in the context of world-class sports and physical education. During the past 15 years, the global trade of fitness services has highlighted this standardization and in the recent years the licensed group exercise offering has been booming. While Les Mills, for example, has been licensing its exercise programs for nearly twenty years, new forms of standardized ways of exercising, such as Zumba, CrossFit and Bokwa, are continuously coming to market. (See Parviainen 2011; Sassatelli 2010, 1-2; Bolitho & Conway 2015, 3-5.)

For fitness centers, standardization allows for more flexibility as employees can be used interchangeably (Ritzer and Stillman 2001) – the structure of the class remains the same, regardless of the instructor. Standardized group fitness classes are thus predictable for consumers, since the instructors have somewhat strict guidelines on how to perform the classes. But in the jungle of different types of group fitness exercises, it is ultimately the brand that is in a more central role in attracting customers. If a group fitness brand would not create a fitness center any extra income, they would most likely prefer to standardize their own classes and thus avoid purchasing licenses. (Parviainen 2011, 532).

1.2 The subject of this study

In this study my aim is to examine what sorts of rhetoric techniques are used in Les Mills' program advertisements to persuade consumers to attend, perhaps even prefer Les Mills group exercise classes. There are several different branded and globally spread group fitness programs on the market. I chose Les Mills advertisements as my study subject for several reasons. First, Les Mills is a unique operator in the market because of the wide

range of different types of classes it offers. The classes range from dance classes to HIIT workout and yoga-inspired classes and the types of music and atmosphere are designed accordingly. This is something that differentiates Les Mills from its competitors, as the other well-known international brands, e.g. Zumba and Piloxing, focus on a narrower niche. Zumba, for example, is a group fitness brand that bases all of its classes on Latin music and dance moves, whereas Piloxing focuses on a combination of Pilates and boxing and the classes vary mainly based on their intensity. This difference makes Les Mills a fruitful subject for studying, as it may be possible to identify different types of arguments, perhaps even discourses, when the programs that are advertised by the same operator vary significantly.

Secondly, because of its long-term standing in the fitness industry, Les Mills has distributed a lot of advertising material during its nearly twenty years of operating. Since the competition among the branded group fitness classes has gotten fiercer during the recent years, studying Les Mills advertising from those years might prove to be meaningful in terms of observing possible evolvement in the ads or the underlying culture of the industry.

The third reason for choosing Les Mills advertisements lies in the popularity of the brand. Les Mills International is the world’s largest provider or branded group fitness classes that are distributed to health clubs. Some of this success may be due to being an early operator in the market. However, as the competition increases, it is interesting to analyze the means the market leader might have for protecting its position by its advertisements.

Les Mills International (LMI) was born in 1997, when Philip Les Mills started distributing his barbell class called BODYPUMP outside of his family’s own fitness locations. Since then, the number of different sorts of Les Mills programs has risen up to 16, including weight training classes, dance classes and even children's’ classes. Les Mills classes are currently offered in 100 countries around the world. In addition to classes that are taught at fitness clubs by live instructors, Les Mills also offers an ”on demand” option for consumers: digital classes that are available on consumers’ device around the clock.

LMI sells program licenses to health and fitness clubs. When a club purchases a license, they are allowed to offer that specific class to their customers. However, the instructors also need to be certified to teach the programs and continuously pay to keep their license, so income formation comes from two sources. The “on demand” option, of course, has created a new source of income for LMI: the actual end-users of the classes.

Every three months the program designers at LMI create a new choreography for each of the programs, drawing on the latest trends in music and fitness culture. The new choreography is then performed by LMI instructors, filmed and dispatched with instructor notes and licensed music to the 130 000 trained and certified Les Mills instructors around the world. (See Parviainen 2010, 530; Les Mills International 2016.)

LMI provides clubs with ample amount of advertising material to make use of at their facilities. It has also formed communities around its different programs on social media, which are free to join for everyone. Most of the marketing of Les Mills classes is hence actually done by LMI. Interestingly, most of the advertising is done without any localization. As the Les Mills programs, the advertisements too are identical all over the world.

The program advertisements are material that are distributed to health and fitness clubs for their usage. Posters, banners and even huge wallpapers decorate the facilities that offer Les Mills classes. For the most part the program ads are indeed used inside the clubs, not outside the facilities. Therefore, it seems fair to assume that the purpose of these ads is not to lure more people into utilizing specific fitness clubs, but rather to encourage the people already using the facilities to attend Les Mills classes – or perhaps even prefer them over other types of classes.

1.3 The goals and structure of this study

The purpose of this study is to examine the types of rhetoric that is used to persuade people to attend Les Mills group fitness classes. Surprisingly enough, even though the industry and the number of standardized classes offered globally has grown rapidly, there

are no previous studies which would closely examine the branding and advertising efforts of these major exercise program brands. There is, however, a quite substantial amount of research made on the psychological, cultural and sociological aspects of the modern fitness trends. My aim is to utilize this previous literature and the framework of rhetoric discourse analysis to find out whether these two combined might explain how a group fitness company such as Les Mills can successfully brand and position a service that essentially is largely produced by the consumers themselves.

The research questions are defined as follows:

1. What kind of rhetoric is used to persuade consumers to attend Les Mills group fitness classes?
2. How might these methods work in the context of brand building, i.e. positioning the Les Mills brand as superior to other standardized group fitness class brands?

In the next chapter I will first discuss literature concerning advertising, especially in service context. I will then introduce the previous literature on fitness related issues, both industry wise and partially also from the viewpoint of social psychology, as issues related to one's bodily self-image, for example, might be important factors behind his exercise behavior.

In the third chapter I will describe the methodological framework that is used to analyze the material. The fourth chapter presents the findings of my analysis and the fifth chapter summarizes my conclusions. The final chapter gathers my thoughts of this study as well as presents suggestions for further research.

2 Fitness, service and fitness as a service – overview of the previous literature of service marketing and the industry of fitness

To discover the relevant topics in previous research for this study's perspective, I first determined the basic elements of the studied subjects; the Les Mills advertisements. The advertised commodity is a service. Moreover, the nature of the fitness class as a service is self-service-like: the quality of the output is highly dependent on the consumer's own contribution in the consumption process. The fitness class service also resides on a field of consumption that is packed with cultural meanings. Therefore, when looking into previous research, I wanted to find out two things: what is the current academic view on service advertising and what is known about fitness as a cultural phenomenon and as a business industry.

Service advertising has received a substantial amount of academic attention and is a topic that has been studied for decades. Advertisements of the fitness industry related services, on the other hand, is not a widely researched topic, and the literature is mostly quite recent. Some studies touch the issue from a broader marketing perspective; others examine advertising in relation to health issues or beauty standards. Few studies do address advertisements that promote exercising, but mostly from a consumer psychology perspective. There is, however, some literature on the fitness discourse, discussing the cultural aspects of exercising and its implications for fitness as a business. Many of the other articles do also add value for context of this study, as they provide information on previous knowledge on i.e. body image issues and its implications on marketing. I will discuss them in the latter part of this chapter.

2.1 Service as a commodity: what's the difference?

For many years, scholars have suggested that the marketing of services differs remarkably from marketing tangible goods. The intangible nature of services makes it harder for consumers to visualize the consumption of the service. Moreover, intangibility also makes it more complex for marketers to communicate the benefits of consuming their service. (E.g. Parasuraman, Zeithaml & Berry 1985; George & Berry 1981; Mittal 1998.) In addition to intangibility, inseparability of consumption and production, heterogeneity of the output quality and perishability of the utility after consumption have been defined as the major characteristics differentiating services from products (Kotler & Armstrong 2000, 51).

Vargo & Lusch (2004), however, challenge the traditional characteristics of services, claiming that most of the traditional views on differences between goods and services have been defined merely form the manufacturer's point of view. However, the consumer's perspective differs from the traditional characterization of services. Thus the marketer of goods and services wants to make the consumer interested in his offerings, the marketer's perspective should always equal the consumer's perspective – not the manufacturer's.

First of all, Vargo & Lusch (2004, 328) remark that intangibility is not an issue for the consumer, but rather for the producer. The consumer does not purchase a product or a service, but rather the anticipated benefits of consumption of that product or service. Sales management literature, for example, has for long encouraged the marketing of the intangible benefits of both products and services. This shifts the focus from the tangibility issue to emphasizing the benefits of a strong (but yet again intangible) brand, where most of the business value lies.

According to Vargo & Lusch (2004, 329), the concern for heterogeneity is also an issue of perspective: standardization can be more effective from the producer's point of view, but the consumers' judgments of even the most homogenous products may vary remarkably. The perceived value of either a good or a service is defined by the various and ever

changing needs and preferences of the consumers. Therefore, the heterogeneity of service production is not an issue, but rather a goal.

The inseparability of production and consumption has traditionally been characterized as bringing the consumer into the production process, making them interact simultaneously with the producer in the service process (Vargo & Lusch 2004, 329). However, as Lovelock (2000, 145) notes, many services are partially or even largely produced separate from the consumer. Vargo & Lusch (2004, 330) suggest that, once again, the consumer does not make such a demarcation between the production and the consumption, even when purchasing tangible goods. The good serves as a mere appliance in pursuing consumer's goals: the actual value of the good emerges from consumption and in consumption. Grönroos (2011, 282) notes that identifying when the value of a service for the consumer occurs is also challenging, as each consumer perceives it individualistically. Value is created when the company's resources interact with the consumer, but the time period when this happens is dependent on the consumer. The company is only the facilitator that supports the customer's value creation rather than a value creator *for* the customer. Therefore, service marketing should actually be about making promises about the expected value of utilizing the service, not the service in itself. (Grönroos 2006, 324.)

Vargo & Lusch (2004, 331) and Gummerson (1999, 123) criticize the division of tangible goods and intangible services by perishability, as the concept does not commonly apply to most goods and services. Food, for example, may rot while in storage. On the other hand, the ATM is a service that can go unused for weeks without no damage. Vargo & Lusch (2004, 331) also note that the benefits of using a service might be even more far-reaching than using a product: physical fitness training, for example, can provide benefits over time. The consumer's view on perishability can, thus, be defined in relation to period during which the good or the service can produce benefits.

2.2 Service as an advertising challenge: how to engage consumers?

Advertising in general can assume either the form of argumentation or narrative. The former is based on persuasion through logical arguments, while the latter persuades by

presenting the favorable consequences of product consumption, appealing to the consumer's emotional side. (Boller & Olson 1991; Lien & Chen 2013; Padgett & Allen 1997.) Huisman (2005, 286; 299) suggests that advertisements are positioned in a continuum. At one end, there's narrative, even "magical" advertising that transports the commodity's values into the consumer's life. Advertisements at the other end, then again, are informative, focusing more on the commodity itself.

The intangible nature of services – or the intangible benefits of consuming either a service or a product, if concurring with the Vargo & Lusch (2004) view – has been suggested to lead to generality: the consumer may have a hard time distinguishing one service provider from another (Hill, Blodgett, Baer & Wakefield 2004, 156). Berry and Clarck (1986, 53) suggest that presenting an abstract service in a more tangible manner helps service providers differentiate from others. They propose four specific marketing strategies for this.

1. Visualization: Producing a vivid mental picture of the qualities of the service, often by utilizing images.
2. Association: Combining the service with an extrinsic person, object, location or event.
3. Physical representation: Combining extrinsic items to the core attributes of the service.
4. Documentation: Providing consumers with facts and figures that establish the benefits of consuming the service.

Hill, Blodgett, Baer & Wakefield (2004, 162) studied the impact of visualization and documentation on advertisement perceptions. Visualization technique made consumers perceive the ad as more informative and assume a higher service quality. Documentation, then again, was found to be especially effective within hedonistic service advertisements, whereas it had little impact on utilitarian services advertisements.

However, steeply dividing strategies may not be beneficial. Padgett and Allen (1997, 55-57) suggest that service advertisements should convey both functional and symbolic meanings about the service experience. They note that the division between

informational and emotional advertisements may be counterproductive in the case of services. The experiential nature of the service poses a challenge for the advertisements that utilize merely informative argumentation: they convey the functional benefits of the service but do little for the service brand. Moreover, purely argumentative advertisements are likely to prompt consumers to form counterarguments. As services are experiences, a narrative approach can represent both the experiential side of the service and the functional benefits of consuming it, without risking contradicting interpretations. When narrative transportation occurs, the consumer is influenced by affective persuasion instead of a systematic analysis of the strength of the advertisement's argument (Escalas 2007, 422).

2.3 Narratives of the self

Green and Brock (2000, 702) suggest that a narratives persuasion power lies in its ability to transport the consumer into the story, i.e. become "lost" in it. This evokes strong affective responses towards the advertisement whilst reducing negative cognitive responses. Green and Brock, however, claim that advertisements are not narratives but rhetorical documents. This view, though, has been challenged by Phillips and McQuarrie (2010, 374), who point out that even a single image can provide the consumer with all the necessary elements to construct both a plot and the characters for the perceived narrative. They do, however, note that the difference between a visual metaphor and a narrative evoked by a picture is not always clear. It may even be largely dependent on the viewer. Whereas one consumer might interpret a picture as a clear metaphor, another could construct a more comprehensive narrative of the situation pictured in the advertisement. If a narrative interpretation is evoked, the consumer is more engaged with the brand, constructing herself an experience of the advertisement. (Phillips & McQuarrie 2010, 376.)

Escalas (2004, 8) states that it is socially accepted for consumers to use products and brands to "create and represent desired self-images and to present these images to others or even to themselves". When incoming information is interpreted as a narrative, the consumer implements that story into existing recollections of similar stories, often

linked with some aspect of the self. Consumer may even relate the narrative to his personal story, intertwining the narrative provided by the advertiser and the narratives of the self. The consumer then constructs the advertised brand as something needed to achieve e.g. a self-related goal or to fulfill a psychological need. (Escalas 2004, 11-12.)

Escalas (2004, 13) states that if the consumer "matches an ad story where the brand being advertised helps the actor achieve certain goals (e.g., self-enhancement, belonging to a reference group, etc.) onto his/her own stories about actions taken to achieve those same goals, a link may be formed between the brand and the consumer's perceived ability to achieve a desired outcome". Cova and Dalli (2009, 322) talk about a similar process as reframing: taking the advertised narrative of value propositions and re-imagining them in the context of one's own life projects. This process identifies the consumer as a more active participant in the narrative process, transforming them from mere spectators to producers.

Interestingly, in the context of bodily images in advertising, the narrative structure may have both the power to shield the consumer from critical self-evaluation and be the cause of it. Studying fashion advertisements, Philips and McQuarrie (2010, 387) discovered out that fashion pictures might ultimately emphasize the gap between the ideal and the real self. In their study they found that people tend to act more favorably towards fashion ads with grotesque imagery than more conventional imagery. The unorthodox pictures transport the consumers into a story-like narrative – and away from the discrepancies in their own identity. However, Martínez Lirola and Chovanec (2012, 502), having studied advertisements of cosmetic surgery services, suggest that imagery of the idealistic body can be used specifically to evoke feelings of bodily inferiority – thus persuading consumers into consuming cosmetic surgery. There is a narrative-like structure to the implications of such imagery: the pre-surgery body is faulty and to blame for the deficiencies in one's life. The body is seen as a vehicle through which success can be achieved, and so improving the body improves the overall quality of the consumer's life, resulting in e.g. a more fulfilling romantic life and higher self-confidence.

2.4 Identification and consumer culture

If the persuasive power of narratives is linked to the perceived and pursued self, it seems necessary to also look into how consumers might view themselves in relation to the brands and companies that are being advertised. Bhattacharya & Sen (2003, 77) suggest that when a brand or a company helps a consumer satisfy on or more key self-definitional need, identification with that brand or company is formed. Their view stems from social identity theory, according to which individuals typically go beyond their personal identity to create a social identity for the purposes of articulating their sense of self. This is done by identifying with or categorizing oneself as a member of different social categories. These categories can be either rather salient, such as gender or ethnicity, or more situational, such as hobbies or occupation. Shankar, Elliott and Fitchett (2009, 76) also note, that whereas identities once used to be somewhat stable and solid, it is nowadays considered to be a dynamic project that needs to be constantly produced and reproduced. Consumer culture is an arena for the construction of identities: through consumerism people are now empowered to manufacture their desired identity.

Bhattacharya and Sen (2003, 77) suggest that in the era of consumerism, certain companies represent and offer attractive, meaningful social identities to consumers that help them satisfy important self-definitional needs. They do, however, note that consumer-company identification cannot be one-sidedly imposed by companies but rather driven by the consumers who are seeking for fulfillment for their self-definitional needs. As Grönroos (2006, 404), also Bhattacharya and Sen suggest that instead of merely communicating the benefits of using their product or service, the company needs to tap on to the perceived advantages of identification with the company or its product.

The consumer can, however, identify with more than just a brand, product or a service. Kilambi, Laroche and Richard (2013, 45) note that commodities carry meanings beyond their function and commercial value: they are vehicles for communicating culturally shared meanings and establishing interaction with similar minded people, forming brand communities. Underwood, Bond and Baer (2001) also discuss both the consumer's identification with the service provider and other service users. They emphasize the social aspect of consumption: consumers are not merely looking for identification with a brand

or a company, but seeking for social experiences as well. The more the brand serves as a basis for social interaction and social cohesion, the greater the social identity (Underwood et al 2001, 5). They therefore suggest that organizations should create and leverage opportunities for group experiences to build stronger identifications with the brand. These communities are based on shared values, rituals, customs and even a sense of moral responsibility (Kilambi et al 2013, 46). Identification with the brand community, in turn, encourages a stronger involvement with the brand and strengthens brand loyalty (Matzler, Pichler, Füller & Mooradian 2011, 878). Moreover, the authors note that emphasizing the group experience may be of special importance to companies in industries that provide mostly functional benefits (Underwood et al 2001, 9).

2.5 The discourse of fitness and health: what is "being fit"?

As noted before, not much has been written about fitness advertisements in particular. However, research on other aspects of health and fitness culture has been done. Much of the literature concerns the typical representations of the body and health in cultural and commercial context.

Smith Maguire (2006, 2) notes that fitness is not a fixed concept. The definitions of fitness change over time and vary between different aspects. Whereas fitness in the 19th century was seen as a question of national strength and moral character, it is nowadays a manifestation of individual improvement. Moreover, even though sports medicine sees fitness as combination of strength, flexibility and endurance, many consumers evaluate fitness based on appearances.

Machado Gomes (2010, 92) has identified two discourses in the current health ideology, which can be contradictory to each other at times: the justification of an ascetic lifestyle and the pleasure of body consumption. The first refers to the representations of "the ideal body", obtained through hard work and self-regulation in regards to eating and exercising habits. The latter is a more patronizing view on health, offering individuals collective advice on how to improve their lives and health through following specific diets, training programs, healthcare procedures and associated products. Even though both

trends produce similar results – the idea of dominating one's own body – the ascetic discourse is seen as demonstrating one's moral and physical superiority whereas the patronizing one is a less effortful alternative for the consumer.

The definition of fitness can perhaps also be derived from the characteristics associated with being "not fit" – being overweight, that is. Duncan and Klos (2012, 1-5) note that there is a remarkable social stigma to being fat. Therefore, exercising is seen as liberating and as a means to take control over one's own life. This has spread to the everyday discourse of wellbeing: the expression "you've been taking good care of yourself" can be seen as code for "you look slender" (Duncan & Klos 2012, 6). Smith Maguire (2006, 119) also suggest that as the society associates outer appearances and physical health with success, fallibilities such as obesity and diseases are seen as matters of individual choice and failure. Dworkin and Wachs (2009, 12) remark that the appearance of a fit body is a critical determinant of one's social status: the shape of the body is a metaphor for health and the size of it is seen even as an implication of one's moral values.

Furthermore, Dworkin and Wachs (2009, 38) note that even if exercise is promoted for both health and appearance related reasons, the fitness genre often uses the vocabulary of the latter, using words such as "sculpt" and "transform" when referring to the body. Performance is measured by statistics such as centimeters and kilograms and sometimes even by "before and after" -photos. These types of measures indicate what is primarily seen as success in fitness: the appearance is everything.

2.6 Consumerization of the body: how does the body become a commodity?

Dworkin and Wachs (2009, 15-16) point out that our tendency to view the body as something "natural" is not really accurate. In addition to the physical attributes determined by our genes, our bodies are also a result of the effects of our cumulative purchases, internalized cultural norms, interactions with others and social practices. The body in our culture is, quite paradoxically, supposed to be both natural and a result of our own efforts. (Dworkin & Wachs 2009, 177.)

Dworkin and Wachs (2009, 36) also suggest that there is a culture of "bodily lack" that requires the consumer to constantly maintain or improve the form of her body. From the social psychology view, Hagger and Chatzisarantis (2005, 71) suggest that the self is an essential concept in theories of motivation and behavior in the context of exercising. Exercising and dieting are the only means of modifying physical appearance in terms of body fat and muscle tone, (with the exception of aesthetic surgery). Therefore, as the appearance is an important aspect of self-perception, it is likely to influence the decision making of one's exercising habits.

What is sold and promoted by the fitness industry is not necessarily a healthy body, but a body that represents the gendered image of health (Dworkin & Wachs 2009, 2-3). Gurrieri, Previte and Brace-Govan (2012) have addressed the way marketers represent different body types and physical activity. They note that physical activity is often presented as something that is easy to do and fit into one's daily schedule. Furthermore, especially women are presented according to a certain normative: the female body is sleek, does not contain too much muscle and the whole look of the woman is intact with no evidence (such as excess sweat) of physical exercise. Marketing treats the body as a site of consumption, encouraging consumers to evaluate their own bodies through the lens of the ideal, healthy body. (Gurrieri et al 2012, 129; 134-135.) McCracken (1993, 2) and Duncan and Klos (2014, 246) make a somewhat blunter observation about advertisements that regard the appearance of the consumer: to generate profit, dissatisfaction towards the consumer's own body has to be evoked to be able to offer them a solution.

Engaging in physical activities may also have an impact on one's self-esteem (Hagger & Chatzisarantis 2005, 72). Featherstone (2010, 197; 1982, 88) goes a bit further, noting that improving the body is not the actual goal of exercising. The current consumer culture associates beautiful body figures with exquisite lifestyle concepts, suggesting that a fit body is the key to an exciting standard of living and overall quality of life. In a way, then, fitness can be interpreted both as a lifestyle and as a toolset to acquire a desired lifestyle. Featherstone suggests that images of bodies in e.g. advertising invite comparisons, making consumers aware of who they aren't and thus who they'd wish to be. Therefore,

one of the central themes in consumer fitness culture is the transformation from “before” to “after” – whether they picture the consumer’s body or their life in general.

2.7 The themes in commercial fitness

As fitness has been culturally constructed as a lifestyle that takes place primarily within one’s leisure time, the field is situated within a culture of expectations related to leisure: it is characterized by attributes such as fun, immediacy, novelty and variety. The actors in the industry are not constrained merely by the tastes of the consumers, but also by the current culture of instant gratification. Consequently, the role of fitness texts is not only to inform the consumer of the exercises themselves but also to educate them of the benefits of working out and of motivational strategies for adopting fitness as a lifestyle. The contradictory aspects of fitness as a long-term investment and as a leisure time activity pose a challenge for the fitness market. (Smith Maguire 2002, 454-455.)

The expanding amount of health education and exercising options has given rise to the affinity between consumers and fitness goods and services. This link is reinforced by three recurring themes in the fitness industry communications, regarding particular attitudes towards the consumers’ body. (Smith Maguire 2002, 450-454.)

1. **Fitness as a lifestyle.** The body can be seen as a consumer project: a lifestyle choice and even an enterprise-like function that can be managed and developed. For the commercial industry, a lifestyle approach to fitness is a way to broaden the potential for consumption and avoid the obstacles limiting the adoption of fitness. The fitness industry has constructed a consumer lifestyle of “self-creation”. A central element of this discourse is the body-as-enterprise logic: the project needs to be managed and developed through self-work and choices in the consumer market. (Smith Maguire 2002, 454.)
2. **Fitness as a source for calculable rewards.** If the body is seen as an enterprise-like investment, the performance of it should be monitored as well. The body is a source for calculable rewards and it is made to be accountable for its achievements against set goals and measurements. The set of goals and

accountable units vary based on what aspect of health and fitness is emphasized. Literal figures, such as calories burned and inches lost, can be coupled with vaguer concepts of e.g. minimizing health risks and gaining self-confidence. (Smith Maguire 2002, 456-457.)

3. **Fitness as a motivational dilemma.** Changing the body is slow and requires a lot of work that needs to be kept up continuously. On the other hand, fitness takes place on one's leisure time, where "a lot of work" is not a desirable feature. Motivating can thus take the form of either self-discipline or self-reward, depending on whether exercising is coupled with attributes of work or leisure. (Smith Maguire 2002, 459-461.)

Lagrossen and Lagrossen (2007), on the other hand, studied the dimensions of service quality in the health and fitness industry from the consumer's point of view. The dimensions – ergo the things the consumers need, want and appreciate in a service – were identified as physical change, mental change and pleasure. Similarly to other authors, also Lagrossen and Lagrossen note that physical change can be divided into two subcategories: beauty and functionality. Mental change was also found to have two aspects to it: the general positive psychological effects of exercising and some more specific attributes, often linked to certain types of exercise (e.g. the feeling of harmony in a yoga class). Pleasure includes the satisfaction of interacting with other customers and staff members, but also the physical enjoyment of exercising. It is noted, however, that not all consumers experience immediate physical pleasure while exercising, but rather endure the discomfort in hope for pleasurable effects in the long run. (Lagrossen & Lagrossen 2007, 45.)

3 Theoretical framework and methodology

The purpose of this study is to determine what sorts of rhetoric is used to communicate the value of exercising and the value of the brand in Les Mills advertising. My approach is based on the views of qualitative research taken by Maykut & Morehouse (1994, 12), who state that the qualitative researcher seeks patterns that emerge from the data, instead of making hypotheses and testing them. Thus my aim is to identify and analyze rhetorical devices that are used to construct and convey certain arguments and their justifications and seek common themes and patterns that might emerge from the studied material.

My study resides in the field of discourse analysis. The concept of discourse in this study is defined as a relatively solid entity of meanings that constructs reality in a certain way (Suoninen 1999, 21). In this sense, discourse refers to such meanings, metaphors, representations, narratives and arguments which together form a certain kind of a description of things (Burr 2001, 64; 74-78). Each discourse emphasizes different aspects and has different implications for what we should or should not do. Similarly, each discourse claims to be the truthful one, continuously producing and reproducing itself: discourses affect the way we talk and write about things, and as we do, we reproduce the discourse further.

My choice of method for studying the Les Mills advertisements is rhetorical discourse analysis. In rhetorical discourse analysis, the processes of producing meanings are analyzed: how the meanings are constructed as convincing and desirable versions of reality and how the audience is persuaded to commit to those versions. As rhetorical discourse analysis is based on the interpretative nature of reality, there is no unambiguous way of knowing what sorts of attitudes an actor producing meanings has towards the reality. Therefore, the purpose of this study is not to find out what the proposed meaning of the advertisements is as such, but rather through the arguments that are being made for the subject. (See Jokinen 1999, 126-127.)

In this section I will first discuss rhetorical discourse analysis in an organizational context and why a rhetoric approach can be a fruitful method for analyzing advertisements. The

basics of rhetoric as a discipline are then discussed in short, and common rhetorical methods are introduced. Lastly I will explain the principles and guidelines I will use in conducting my analysis.

3.1. Rhetorical discourse analysis in an organizational context

In organizational studies, the role of language started to get more attention in the 1990's. Early institutional studies did address the actor's agency and intrinsic change, but later the studies tended to ignore these aspects and focus more on how organizations could constrain social action and produce homogeneity or how they were subjects to change due to exclusively outside-driven events. (See Green & Li 2011, 1663.) Perhaps the change in the interests in the early 1990's arose from the changing environment in which the organizations were operating in. As Evangelisti Allori and Garzone (2011, 9-10) note, the rising interest in communications in both organizations and among researchers stems from the fact that organizations nowadays operate as partially open socio-technical systems which are in constant dialogue with both primary and secondary stakeholders. Communication is thus an integral instrument of the organizations operations. Above all, it plays a crucial role in the formation of the corporate image and identity construction – elements, that effect the stakeholders' perception of the company and its output.

In recent years, the analysis of rhetoric has become recognized as an important analytical tool for the analysis of organizational discourse (Dam, Holmgreen & Strunck 2011, 393). The emphasis is on contemporary, "new" rhetoric, which perceives communication as something that shapes people and communities, as opposed to the old rhetoric, in which the people are seen as shapers of communication (Green & Li 2011, 1671–1672). Contemporary rhetorical analyses in organizational context take a constructionist perspective into rhetoric and define audiences as multiple different groups of stakeholders who may have different interests towards the organization (Fairhurst & Putnam 2014, 278). It focuses on uncertainty and possibility: situations in which the intent and the interpretation of the message may be ambiguous, the credibility of the source contested and the nature of persuasion context dependent.

In organizational context, rhetorical analysis is often used as an embedded method in a larger study. However, it has also been used as a key methodological approach to gain insight on particular forms of business discourse, such as corporate strategies, annual reports and marketing material and strategies (see Zachry 2009, 76). At present, rhetoric has established itself as a valid perspective on advertising phenomena among advertising and consumer research (McQuarrie & Phillips 2007, 3).

3.2 Why study rhetoric in the advertising context?

Rhetoric as a discipline has always had a very pragmatic approach to the use of language and symbols: it is more concerned with what works, over and above of what is actually true or right. Moreover, rhetoric is about how to say things, over what to say. Advertising works under the same pragmatic philosophy: the purpose of advertisements is to achieve the desired impact on the consumers, causing a specific response. Anything other is secondary. Because of the similar goals, it is not surprising that rhetorical perspectives can contribute significantly to the understanding of advertising. (McQuarrie & Phillips 2008, 5-7.)

Cultural theorists consider advertising to be one of the most influential ideological forms in modern capitalist societies: not only does it represent the surrounding consumer culture but also recreates it (Blakely 2011, 686). As the major goal of advertising is not only to inform consumers but to persuade them as well, it is not surprising that advertising is filled with rhetorical devices both in verbal and nonverbal forms (Tom & Eaves 1999, 39), thus making it a fruitful subject for studying rhetoric.

In advertising context, what to say consists of a decision about what attribute or position to claim. Once chosen, there are a variety of styles to choose from to deliver the message. Stylistic choices might include for example being straightforward, giving the facts some embellishment or expressing an argument in a pictorial form. The content remains the same, but each style communicates it differently – and the performance may vary accordingly. Thus, in addition to the content, the chosen style communicates as well. The separation of content and style is characteristic to the rhetorical perspective: it has even

been argued that the style of advertising was nearly invisible before the rhetorical perspective began to be applied. (McQuarrie & Phillips 2008, 4.)

In fact, contemporary advertising has been characterized as an issue of persuasiveness, differentiating it from its predecessors in the advertising industry (McFall 2004, 35). Schudson (1984, 58), for example, notes that the earlier ads used to rely on the rationality of the consumer, informing them of the attributes of the advertised commodity. Since the twentieth century, however, ads have become increasingly persuasive, targeted to the non-rational and impulsive consumer (ibid 35). The focus of advertisements has shifted from giving information about products to transforming consumer attitudes towards products (Leiss, Klein & Jhally 1986, 153).

McQuarrie and Mick (1996, 425; 435) suggest that most advertising texts must perform their function under circumstances where the consumer is under no obligation to process them at all. Rhetorical figures – deviations from the expected form of communication that are not rejected as nonsensical of faulty – are used as a tool to overcome this issue. They can provide positive effects on ad attention, liking and recall (ibid 427). Rhetoric, then again, "integrates and explains stylistic devices that may be used to accomplish these and related goals". If, for example, advertisement receives only seconds of consumer's attention, rhetorical figures can be used to make the argument memorable at a glance. (Ibid 435.)

To sum up, contemporary advertising and rhetoric already have a common starting point to begin with: both are concerned with persuading the audience. Consumers nowadays have the complete freedom to ignore advertisements or devote minimum effort into processing them (McQuarrie & Mick 1996, 427). Using rhetorical figures in advertising is a way to overcome this: a well-chosen set of styles can increase the odds of an ad being noticed and processed favorably, while still effectively communicating the arguments of the ad (McQuarrie & Mick 1999, 38).

3.3 Rhetorical analysis as a method

Rhetoric is an ancient discipline that has been central to Western thought for over 2000 years. Since its early days in classical antiquity, rhetoric has been more concerned with how to say things than what to say. Rhetoric then, put simplistically, is convincing the audience of the credibility of a specific argument. The contemporary form of it, the so called new rhetoric, is especially focused on issues of style rather than content: it is interested in analyzing the communicative devices that contribute to the perceived reliability of an argument and encourages commitment towards it. The basic ideology is that the impact of an argument is entirely or partly dependent on the style selected for it. In any given situation, there is a palette of potentially applicable styles to choose from, and it is presumed that one of these styles can be determined to be the most effective in a given instance. (McQuarrie & Phillips 2008, 3-4; Jokinen 1999, 46.)

Rhetorical analysis can be used for studies either in itself or as a device for discourse analysis. In rhetoric, the emphasis is primarily on the formation of arguments and the relationship between the actor and his audience, whereas discourse analysis is more concerned with the abilities of rhetoric to produce cultural meanings and the interactive process of interpretation. (Jokinen 1999, 46-17.)

The basis for rhetorical analysis is the emphasis on the interpretative nature of reality, (Jokinen 1999, 127). Potter (1996, 97-98) describes 'reality' as something that is being manufactured by the descriptions of different actors: the world is constructed by their descriptions and, on the other hand, their descriptions are constructed as well. This idea allows for examining how the descriptions have been put together, what materials have been used and what sorts of things and events are produced by them. The results are not expected to give a straightforward account of the actors' attitudes towards the subject or the 'reality' of the world, but to interpret the arguments that are being made on behalf or against the subject. (Potter 1996, 107; Jokinen 1999, 127.)

Accordingly, Potter (1996, 107) notes that the consequence of emphasizing rhetoric is that when descriptions are being analyzed, one should also be alert to the possible counterarguments that they are aiming to undermine while rationalizing other claims. A

central feature of a constructed description, therefore, is that it counters a range of alternative, possibly competing descriptions of the same subject as well.

The purpose of rhetorical analysis is not to merely identify the rhetoric devices that are being used in descriptions but to examine what is being done with these representations in the settings in which they are produced (Potter 1996, 103). Analysis of these devices only becomes relevant as a part of a broader study: rhetoric in itself is merely one method of constructing social reality (Jokinen 1999, 156). Argumentation is always a part of a larger context and the meaning of an argument is finally constructed in the setting where it is presented in (Billig 1991, 87; Summa 1989, 94). Similarly, Jokinen (1999, 128) notes that one of the fundamental features of argumentation is the relationship between the argument producing actor and his audience: the persuasiveness of the argument is ultimately constructed when the audience is interpreting it. The audience, however, is often not a unanimous unit: an argument and the rhetoric methods used to reinforce it may convince one person but fail to satisfy another.

3.4 Constructing reality with rhetoric

In discourse analysis, rhetoric is often viewed as factual construction, which aims to transform debatable descriptions into indisputable facts. The purpose is to blur the constructive nature of reality and undermine the alternative ways of representing reality. (Jokinen 1999, 129.) Potter (1996, 107) identifies two dimensions in rhetoric argumentation: offensive and defensive rhetoric. Offensive rhetoric is mainly concerned with deflating the alternative descriptions whereas defensive rhetoric is protecting the description of such undermining methods.

Potter (1996, 107) suggests that studies should look both at the procedures through which factual representations are built up and the ones by which they are undermined. He refers to the solid, factual construction methods as reifying discourse and the counter argumentative versions as ironizing. Reifying means turning something abstract into a material thing to construct a factual basis for a description. Ironizing, on the other hand, is described as methods that weaken the literal descriptiveness of these factual versions:

it turns the materialized item back into talk, which is motivated, distorted or erroneous in some way.

Rhetorical methods that can be used to affirm argumentation can broadly be divided into two categories: methods that support the actor making the argument or methods that aim for validating the argument itself. The former means constructing the actor as trustworthy and thus reflecting this trust on the argument as well. The latter constructs the argument itself in a manner that emphasizes its truthful nature. In practice, both methods are often used simultaneously, although usual targets for each method can often be determined. (Jokinen 1999, 132.)

The basis of rhetoric argumentation is on defensive rhetoric. In the long run, arguments need to be convincing in themselves – not only because the alternative representations are being undermined effectively (Jokinen 1999, 131). Analyzing rhetorical methods enables examining how facts are constructed, identities produced and reproduced and people, events and phenomenon categorized. In reality, though, different rhetoric methods can be used together. Often they are so intertwined that recognizing each method and their intended functions may be challenging. A detailed analysis of rhetorical methods, however, is a way to examine how facts are constructed and identities and categories created to persuade the audience. (Jokinen 1999, 156-157.)

Potter (1996) and Jokinen (1999) define several methods of defensive rhetoric that are used to reify arguments. I will use these as the basis for my analysis. To analyze the rhetoric methods aimed to increase consumer commitment, I have also complemented the principles of social constructionism by Potter and Jokinen with Kenneth Burke's (1969) theory on identification. Offensive rhetoric will also be discussed in short, as it is an essential tool in strengthening one's argument by questioning the potential opposing view (Potter 1996).

3.4.1 Narratives

Narrative as a concept is a characteristic way for people to perceive life events and communicate them to others. On one hand, narratives are stories crafted, recreated and even relived by the individual. On the other hand, narratives are also a culturally and

historically defined ways of talking about things. Narratives carry communal potential: they are often attached to the shared values of the prevalent culture and community. (Pietikäinen & Mäntynen 2009, 104-108.)

Potter (1996, 173) suggests that narratives should be thought as a rather loose preliminary category that usefully combines together a range of different discursive phenomena to create a story. Using narratives enables the actor to make a rather inexplicit argument by using a description that is coherent enough to imply a specific outcome, but leave it to the addressee to make the interpretation by himself (Jokinen 1999, 144).

Whereas some of the rhetoric devices construct reality by making arguments that appeal to logic and rationality, the narrative paradigm by Fisher (1987) stresses the effectiveness of subjective narratives as a method of persuasion. Fisher argues that people are fundamentally storytelling creatures and therefore the most persuasive message is not the one appealing to rational facts, but rather the story that convinces people of good reasons for engaging in a particular action.

Narratives, however, are evaluated by the audience on their fidelity and coherence and can be rejected if the story is perceived to be dubious. Acceptance of a narrative is based on the addressee's culture, character, history, values, experience and the like, which results in differences on the perceptions of the story: what seems to be a good reason for one may not appeal to someone else. Furthermore, Fisher notes that individuals rely on narratives to constitute common understandings, but the world is based on both cooperative and competing stories that addressee's must evaluate and choose from in order to create and recreate their social reality. (Fisher 1987, 88; 107)

Potter (1996, 162-165) notes that details in narratives can offer a vivid representation of the scene or event, making it seem unlikely to have been invented by the narrator. They can build an image of the narrator as a witness for the event, creating a categorically entitled position for the narrator to be telling the story. Furthermore, arranging details in a way that mirrors techniques used in literature can draw the addressee to the narrative and make the description more memorable. Using details is not, however, unproblematic

as they may be reworked, undermined or ridiculed by opposing actors. Therefore, using vague or idiomatic formulations may at times be more efficient as they cannot be undermined as easily.

3.4.2 Categorization

Constructing reality by making descriptions is always closely connected with categorization: it is, in fact, the central feature of making descriptions. Whenever something is formulated to consist of certain attributes, it is simultaneously categorized as well. (Jokinen 1999, 130.) Descriptions can present things for example as good or bad, routine or exceptional or even normal or abnormal (Potter 1996, 111). On the other hand, arguments can also be constructed in a way that de-emphasizes the actor, impersonating the argument and making it seem like something that "just is". In this view, the actor is simply reporting the argument, not making one. (Potter 1996, 155-156.)

Argumentation can, on the other hand, rely on categorizing the actor as well. Potter (1996, 114) suggests that knowledge is culturally and normatively linked to categories of actors in different ways. Certain categories of actors are seen to be entitled to particular sorts of knowledge and their descriptions of things are thus perceived as reliable. Actors of these categories may not need to justify their claims to such an extent that others would: people assume that their category membership is a product of e.g. training, knowledge or experience. Thus, they are eligible to make descriptions about certain things. However, categories and people's appreciation of them are not permanent and can vary in different cultures and situations (Jokinen 1999, 135). Moreover, actors are not assigned into different categories in a straightforward way. Category entitlements can rather be worked up in a variety of manners: one could earn a position in a category through facts such as a title for example, but also by working on the resources that construct the facts. (Potter 1996, 115.)

Audiences are subjected to categorization as well. People are constantly divided into categories by their attributes: one can, for example, be a homeowner, a tenant or homeless. It should be noted, however, that most categorizations of this sort are actually fairly vague and the definitions of a specific category are often elusive. (Jokinen 1999,

142.) These categories are not stable or clear-cut either: they can be used in very different ways in diverse situations. The same category can, for example, be used to make opposing arguments, such as justifying or criticizing something; in fact, the use of categories is highly situational. (Billig 1987, 149-152.)

3.4.3 Consensus, we-rhetoric and identification

According to Jokinen (1999, 138-139), creating consensus can affirm an argument by implying that it is approved by a large number of people rather than just being the personal opinion of one or a minority. Creating consensus is effective when it draws upon culturally shared understandings or conventions that are considered to be axiomatic among people or the majority of them. Argumentation based on such consensus undermines alternative aspects efficiently, as it is difficult to oppose a view that is suggested to be a commonly accepted norm. A common way of constructing something as normal or routine is externalizing: defining a thing as something that exists without the describer having any influence on it. (Potter 1996, 150.) Externalizing displaces the role and responsibility of the actor and constructs a conception of a situation where there is only one possible alternative to choose from: the actors can only accept the facts and thus exhibit their sense of rationality by acting accordingly (Jokinen 1999, 140).

Another form of contributing to the creation of consensus is the usage of we-rhetoric. Using the word ‘we’ enables the actor to present an argument on behalf of a larger group of people rather than just making a claim of his own. ‘We’ creates a conception of a unified group that shares similar interests. (Jokinen 1999, 139.) Pälli (2003, 102-103) suggests that when the group of people that is addressed is not defined clearly, the usage of ‘we’ constructs a sense of community among them. ‘We’, then, is a choice which indicates that there is a set of people that forms a category unified by common understandings and behavior.

Kenneth Burke (1969) notes that one way of using rhetoric is to appeal to the audience’s need for identification with others. As humans are biologically separated from each other and additional types of separation occur based on e.g. social class and position, people wish to compensate this separation by looking for common interests, attitudes, values

etc. to relate with others and, on the other hand, to differentiate themselves from some other people. Identification is closely linked to committing and can thus be seen as a rhetorical instrument for building commitment. (See Burke 1969, 21-22; Virsu 2012, 229.)

Zulick (2004, 24) divides the Burkean identification into two types: transitive and intransitive identification. First one refers to the mere labeling and definition of target subjects. The latter, perhaps the more relevant type for the purposes of this study, refers to the linguistic processes and strategies by which the actor aims to identify himself or his agenda with the target audience. Rhetoric that aims for identification can construct an aspect that is relevant and that the audience should take into consideration when assessing the message (Virsu 2012, 230).

3.4.4 Metaphors

Using metaphors is defined as describing something with concepts that are not correlative to the literal description of the item. The power of metaphors as persuasive means lies in their ability to associate different meanings to previously known subjects, forming desired connotations between the two items without having to make explicit and thorough arguments. (Jokinen 1999, 148-149.) Potter (1996, 180) characterizes metaphors as using descriptions performatively: whereas literal descriptions are representing things as they are, metaphorical ones are using a more indirect route.

Forceville (2008, 179) notes that to be metaphorical, an expression needs to fill three essential requirements:

1. A metaphor involves no more or less than two domains.
2. One of the domains, the target, is affiliated with the topic about which an argument is being made and the other one, the source, is related to the argument.
3. A metaphor can take a nonverbal form as well as verbal.

Forceville (1998, 80) suggests that metaphors are an attractive tool for advertisers to draw consumers' attention because of their deviation from conventional usage. However, to be effective, the metaphor needs to be resonant with the audience: the more associations the source transfers to the target, the more resonant it is. Interpreting and

analyzing metaphors, therefore, should take the context and the target audience into consideration as well, instead of studying them as isolated rhetoric devices. (Forceville 2008, 180.)

Forceville and Uios-Aparisi (2009, 4) note that a metaphor is not merely a matter of language but a form of thought that can be generated in textual, visual and audible form and even multimodally, combining two or more modes to create the metaphor. In fact, Forceville and Uios-Aparisi suggest that concentrating merely on the verbal manifestations of metaphorical thought may result in overlooking the other forms of metaphors that can convey meanings that verbal mode cannot present. (Forceville & Uios-Aparisi 2009, 13.) Messaris (1998, 17), for example, notes that metaphorical images are particularly well suited for advertising because of their ability to act as 'eye catchers' while combining the image to a more substantive message. Pictorial metaphors are also better recognized transnationally than language. Therefore, pictorial and multimodal metaphors allow for greater cross-cultural access than a mere verbal one (Forceville & Uios-Aparisi 2009, 49). However, arguments made through visual images often need to be supported by words – thus serving as multimodal metaphors – as even relatively simple visualizations can be hard to make sense of without a verbal explanation (Messaris 1998, 219).

3.4.5 Quantification

Dew (2012, 88) suggests that quantification as a rhetorical method is essentially about turning aspects of the real world into numbers. Presenting or endorsing an argument in a quantifiable form often creates an image of a clear, measureable and unambiguous fact (Jokinen 1999, 146). Quantification can be presented either in a numeric form, such as reinforcing an argument by e.g. numbers, percentages and charts, or in a descriptive form, e.g. using qualitative words such as big, bigger, and enormous. Closely related to quantification is also the usage of 'extreme-case' formulations; extrematization and minimization, which involve using the extreme points of relevant descriptive dimensions. (Potter 1996, 187.)

When analyzing quantification as a part of argumentation, one should pay attention to what is being quantified, how quantification is used in argumentation and for what purpose. Potter (1996, 186) notes that one of the powers of any descriptions often lies in what they fail to describe, what is ignored or left out. Accordingly, Jokinen (1999, 146) comments on the definitions of the items that are being quantified: making an argument based on a quantifiably constructed fact often does not specify how the category of the quantified fact has been defined. The choice between using a numeric or a descriptive form of quantification may also influence the effectiveness of the argument.

3.4.6 Offensive rhetoric

Whereas defensive rhetoric aims to strengthen one's own argument, offensive rhetoric is based on undermining the argumentation of the opponent. The methods described earlier can also be used to dilute the rivaling views. One can even prepare for an expected counterargument in advance by addressing it in beforehand. (Jokinen 1999, 155-156.)

Potter (1996, 107) characterizes offensive rhetoric as ironizing: presenting the competing argument in a way that makes it look distorted, even ridiculous and thus unreliable. Defensive rhetoric often operates by turning abstract concepts into "material" things. Ironizing, on the other hand, turns the materially presented thing back into talk that is motivated by the competing actor's own interests.

Defensive and offensive rhetoric should not, however, be regarded as opposing methods, for both are often used simultaneously and are complementary to each other. Potter (1996, 107) notes that a double analytic focus should be taken when analyzing arguments: how are arguments built, and how are they undermined. This can be done simultaneously, as one argument can be seen to not only make a claim but also make a counterclaim to an opposing view at the same time.

3.5 How to study the persuasive methods of the advertisements?

To examine the means of persuasion in an argument, one must first understand how the argument itself is constructed. Arguments consist of three parts: claims, rationale and presumptions. (Kakkuri-Knuuttila & Halonen 1998, 63.) A central dimension of argumentation is also the relationship between the actor and the audience. The persuasiveness of an argument is ultimately defined by the audience. Therefore, when conducting a rhetorical analysis, it is essential to consider the audience: who is being persuaded by the actor. (Jokinen 1999, 128.)

In this study, my aim is not to determine the actual quality of the made arguments or the parts of them as such. In other words, the arguments' factual rationality is not under scrutiny. As McQuarrie and Phillips (2008, 10-12) note, the choice of what to say belongs to disciplines that combine psychology and economics into marketing thought. The choice of how to say things, on the other hand, lands on the territory of rhetoric. As rhetorical methods are used to persuade, I will look for the means which are used to build credibility towards the arguments made by the advertisements and Les Mills. Rhetoric devices can always be interpreted in various ways and arguments are bound to be subjected to the addressee's individual evaluation. Therefore, it will also be necessary to evaluate the possible counterarguments and criticism the constructed message may face.

Whereas rhetorical analysis is often viewed as subordinate to discourse analysis, my stance in this study is that discourse can also be used as a tool of rhetoric. A similar approach has previously been taken e.g. by Virsu (2012, 45), who suggests that different discourses can be seen as a part of the argumentative actor's set of rhetoric tools. Given the findings of the fitness and health discourses discussed in the previous section, my presumption is that the prevalent cultural atmosphere around the subject can be strong enough in itself to persuade people to consume fitness related products and services. Discourses also carry the power to form identities, as the perceptions of both individuals and groups are formed by language and other semiotic systems (Pietikäinen & Mäntynen 2009, 63). Thus the identities created in and by the fitness and health discourse can perhaps also be viewed as rhetoric tools to persuade by e.g. consensus and we-rhetoric.

In the following section, I will analyze the rhetorical methods in Les Mills advertisements utilizing the following questions:

- What are the arguments of the advertisement?
- Which rhetorical methods are used to persuade the consumer to believe the argument?
- What is the audience that is being persuaded?
- Which rhetorical methods may be linked with brand building?

4. Battle heroes and sexy appearances: The analysis of Les Mills advertising

Les Mills advertisements can generally be divided into two categories: quarterly program advertisements and generic advertisements. Both advertisements are used in several contexts and channels. For example, large posters are often hung on the walls of fitness facilities. Digital versions of the advertisements pop up on social media channels, blogs and on websites operated by Les Mills, fitness facilities, Les Mills certified instructors or enthusiastic consumers.

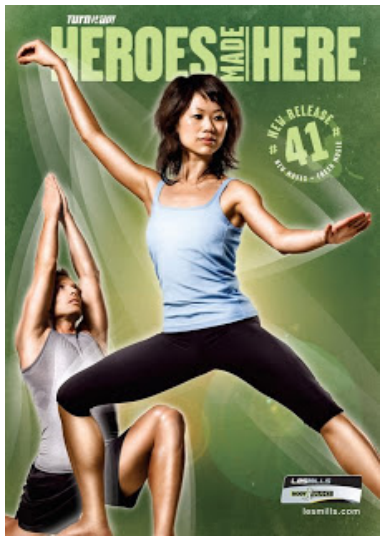
Every Les Mills program's choreography and music is renewed four times a year. Therefore, the program advertisements – often referred to as program posters by Les Mills instructors, facilities and fans – change quarterly as well. It is characteristic for the program advertisements to display both the program name and the running number of the release, distinguishing them from other Les Mills programs and previous releases. Although each program has its own ad, there is always a common theme among the quarterly set of ads. Fitness facilities that offer Les Mills classes are provided with the most current set of ads a few weeks before the new releases are launched. A quarterly ad, therefore, often has a lifespan of three months. After that, it will be replaced with a new one. Digitally posted advertisements naturally remain online, but the digital culture that emphasizes the newest content often tends to bury the old advertisements fairly effectively.

Generic advertisements, on the other hand, are not time specific by their nature. Some of the advertisements are related generally to the Les Mills brand; others are program specific, ergo the emphasized brand is the specific program (e.g. Les Mills BODYPUMP). These ads are not linked to the quarterly releases or any other time specific events. Thus the lifespan of them is longer. The generic posters tend to be on display for months or even years. In online context, getting swamped by newer material naturally affects general ads as well, but their advantage is in the timelessness of the content: the same ads can be used over and over again.

For this study, I have chosen six sets of quarterly advertisements and six generic advertisements to be analysed. In the quarterly sets, I will not analyse all ten advertisements of each set as they are always constructed around a common theme. However, as the means of persuasion may still vary between seemingly similar ads, I will take two or three program advertisements from each set for closer analysis.

The basic argument in all of the Les Mills ads is that people should participate in Les Mills classes. The claims and justifications in the advertisements however vary, and during this chapter I will analyse how those claims, justifications and sometimes even preconceptions are represented in the ads by utilizing different rhetoric devices.

4.1 Heroes made here



The quarterly campaign advertisements of Q2 of 2008 all had a similar headline: Heroes made here. The headline seems to indicate that participating in a Les Mills class turns the attendee into a hero. The hero, however, is a metaphor that carries the attributes commonly linked with heroes: persistency, courage, strength and righteousness, for example. Literal interpretation would be peculiar: no one probably expects to turn into a comic strip hero by exercising, nor do they assume to make courageous things, earning

them a title of a real-life hero, merely by attending a Les Mills class. There is also a commonly known saying of being one's own hero, which might make this metaphor even more powerful than the mere attributes often attached to heroism. Being one's own hero does not require one to achieve the standards placed for heroism by others, but merely exceed one's own expectations for herself.

When majority of the textual content in the quarterly ads is identical or varies only by each program's branded logo or release number, the interesting things to examine are the visual elements. For studying this particular ad set, I purposely chose two very different programs, the barbell class BODYPUMP and the yoga and Pilates inspired BODYBALANCE, to see how the different heroes might be constructed picture-wise.

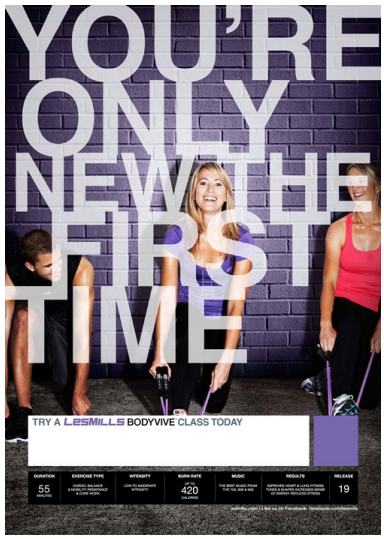
The BODYPUMP poster presents two people with heavy weights on their shoulders in a semi-squat position. The light lines next to their legs and barbells seem to indicate movement. The female model looks concentrated, whereas the male model has a slight grimace on. The background colour is deep red, as is the colouring of the headline. All this seems to create a one big metaphor for hard work that eventually moulds the BODYPUMP class participants into the promised heroes. The BODYBALANCE poster, however, has similar elements, but a very different look and feel. Both models are placed in program characteristic positions as in the BODYPUMP ad, but their facial expressions are calm, even serene. The movement lines almost look like they are forming a ray of light above both models, and the green colouring in the background and the headline adds to the calm atmosphere of the ad.

It goes without saying that some of these differences – the models' postures, for example – are natural occurrences of the characteristic features of both programs. However, based on some of the differences, an interpretation of certain categorizations can be made. For example, comparing the calm and collected atmosphere of the BODYBALANCE advertisement and the laborious feel of the BODYPUMP ad, it seems like BODYBALANCE is constructed as an easy class whereas BODYPUMP is presented as challenging for even the strongest man. In this sense, the headline "Heroes made here" might cause some problems with interpretation, especially if the ads are seen together. If the addressee mostly combines physical strength with heroism, interpreting BODYBALANCE as being an

easy program might cause a conflict between the advertisement's textual and pictorial content.

Another interesting point in the advertisements is how men and women are categorized and used in the ads. As noted before, the female model in the BODYPUMP ad looks concentrated, whereas the male model's grimace seems to indicate that he is finding the exercise rather challenging. One possible explanation for this might lie in the differences between the genders, when it comes to exercising. Culturally, big weights, a relentless attitude and even sweatiness are often linked with exercising men. Women, on the other hand, are often seen as muscle-avoiding exercisers who wish to remain their looks even during the hardest workout (at least when it comes to their public representation). (Dworkin & Wachs 2009, 29-32.) Not only do the models of the ads support this interpretation, but the advertisements' layout as well. Whereas the male model is the focal point of the weight training class BODYPUMP, the yoga-based BODYBALANCE puts the male model on the background. Even though both genders are present in each ad, the layouts seem to indicate that Les Mills is categorizing women, men and their exercising preferences differently – and then reproducing this division to the consumers.

4.2. The hardest part is deciding to go



The advertisement set in the second quarter of 2011 appears to be addressing the problem of getting consumers to start exercising – and then sticking to it. The emphasis of the ads' elements is now turned the other way around from the Q2 2008 set: the pictorial content is on the background, and the varied headlines cover most of each advertisement. Each ad has an informational text box at the bottom of the poster, welcoming consumers to try the advertised class. The box also contains the duration of the class, a description of the exercise type and its intensity level, an estimate of a calorie burn rate, a vague description of the used music, the expected results from attending a class and the program's running number.

Interestingly, even when the content seemingly varies more than in the previously analysed set, it actually seems more coherent. Again, I am taking two program ads as examples: the cardio class BODYATTACK and the strength and cardio hybrid class BODYVIVE. The imagery in both advertisements is rather similar: it shows three people (two women and one man) in program-characteristic poses, with smiles on their faces. The industrial feel of the background is softened with bright yellow and purple. Moreover, there is hardly any sweat present – just a slight glistening on the skin.

All this seems to construct a claim of easiness: exercising looks like something fun that can be done with friends as a leisure time activity. Simultaneously, though, it is constructing categorization of first-timers that indicates that they are afraid of laborious exercising and trying something new. If they would just get themselves to attend a Les Mills class for the first time, the hard part would then be over.

The pictorial metaphors in the ads add to this categorization. The brick wall as a background image may refer to a somewhat well-known metaphor of hitting the wall or breaking it. Brick wall is hard to break or cross, but metaphorically, there lies the impressiveness of being able to do so. The verbal anchor and the brick wall metaphor may well engage the consumers with a narrative, promising at least an easier future in exercising when they have conquered that wall.

On the other hand, there's also a sense of we-rhetoric and consensus in the headlines. Les Mills can be interpreted as a sympathetic and encouraging actor who understands the

hardships beginners face when starting to exercise. At the same time, they also categorize themselves as experts in beginners' exercising, branding themselves as trustworthy choices in the jungle of multiple options to choose from.

Compared to the headline and pictorial content that can attract the consumer into engaging with the ad on an emotional level, the box at the bottom of the page may been seen as a piece of informational content. It´s power to persuade consumers lies in quantification that support the argument that one should attend a Les Mills class. Numerical quantification is present in the form of exercise duration and calorie expenditure. Both can be seen to represent the exercises' needs for monitoring their performance. The burn rate especially could be of specific importance for enabling the culture of vigorously measuring one's own performance and development: first of all, it is a point of sale to calorie conscious consumers and secondly, it is a reference point to which participants can compare their burn rates to and assess their success. Secondly, stating an estimation of calories burned during one class gives an impression that the calorie expenditure during these types of exercise has been well studied. This perhaps makes the Les Mills classes seem like a trustworthy choice, especially to beginners who might not be too familiar with the different types of self-measurement tools in the fitness genre.

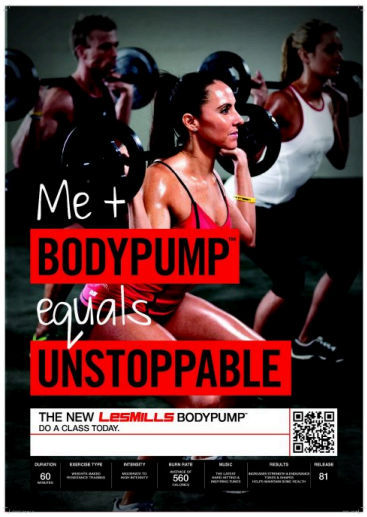
However, there is a downside. If a beginner is totally unaware of the normal calorie expenditure rates for exercising, the mentioned burn rate may be viewed as either small, implicating a worthless exercise, or so big that it may scare the beginners from taking the class. This could, however, be a tactic for making the advertisement address both the beginners and the consumers who already exercise: the headlines and the imagery speak

to the beginners while the burn rate reminds the more experienced consumers of the program's benefits.

Descriptive quantification in the information box has many forms. It is used to describe the intensity of the class, but also in quantifying the results. Even though "increases energy" and "reduces stress" are rather vague expressions, they nevertheless indicate that as a result of participating in Les Mills classes, some amounts of certain conditions in the body will change.

However, as Potter (1996, 186) and Jokinen (1999, 146) note, the power of quantification often lies in what is left out or unexplained. For example, an "up to" calorie burn rate – a maximum burn-rate, that is – says nothing of how this number has been calculated. As participants vary in i.e. body compositions, age, gender and motivation, which all can have an effect on their calorie expenditure, the maximum burn rate could very easily be skewed. This might be even more true for the forms of descriptive quantifications, as the evaluation of attributes such as reduced stress or moderate intensity are not only individual but also highly situational. On the other hand, this might not be a problem at all for e.g. the result claims: for an individual consumer, it is fairly complicated to reliably measure one's stress or energy levels. Thus, even an illusion of such benefits could work in favour of the advertiser.

4.3. Be hot, feel sexy



The second quarter of 2012 presented program advertisements with a straightforward theme of becoming something by attending a Les Mills class. The headlines of the advertisements wary, as do the visual elements, but the claim in each ad is bold: “Be BODYJAM hot”; “Me + BODYPUMP equals unstoppable”; “Feel SH’BAM sexy”.

The pictorial content of these three ads is interesting, as only the BODYPUMP ad seems to fully back up the textual claim. The characteristic features often linked with “hotness” or “sexiness” are not really emphasized in the dance classes BODYJAM and SH’BAM ads, which each show just two models in program characteristic, not “hot” or “sexy” positions. Although all the models look fit, which indisputably is a characteristic feature of good looks, not much more can be said to construct a distinctively sexy image. The BODYPUMP ad, on the other hand, features a woman in the foreground, again in a squat position with a barbell on her shoulders. Looking remarkably shiny – which indicates sweatiness, which then again indicates an intensive workout – she still manages to remain unstoppable, even with a little smile on her face.

Another interesting point of the visual content lies in the settings of the models. The greyish, even industrial-like background of the BODYPUMP advertisement adds to the interpretation of a heavy workout. Both dance class ads, on the other hand, have a more colourful background with city skyline views, creating a feel of a rooftop party rather than a workout. This seems to indicate categorization of dance class and weight training class

participants. The former are characterized as consumers that emphasize the leisure-time aspect of fitness, whereas the BODYPUMP participants are keener on having a workout, emphasizing the work part.

The BODYPUMP ad's visual content seems to work more in favour of justifying the claim made by the headline than the dance classes' imagery. However, the information box at the bottom of the BODYJAM and SH'BAM posters seems to both strengthen the claim of getting hot/sexy and, on the other hand, explaining the lack of the hot/sexy imagery in the ads. First of all, the quantified benefits – the average calories burned and the toning and shaping results – indicate that these classes actually give you the lean and toned body that is culturally characterized as an important part of hot/sexy. Then again, mentioning developing self-expression as a result indicates a rather different take on hotness/sexiness. Self-expression is not a purely bodily attribute. Therefore, this point may appeal to consumers who are not exercising to improve their appearance or consider their ability to express themselves and self-confidence as an essential part of a hot/sexy appearance. Moreover, the lack of explicitly hot/sexy imagery and the rationale of improving self-expression can also be seen as offensive rhetoric, undermining the possible backlash generated by the seemingly appearance-focused headline.

The information box's calorie burn rate in the Q2 2012 set differs from the similar text in e.g. the Q2 2011 set. No more "up to" burn rates: the rates in each advertisement are now expressed as averages. This type of presentation, of course, faces the same challenges as the burn rate discussed in the previous section. However, as the "up to" indicated that the 560 burn rate of BODYPUMP, for example, was the maximum a participant could expect to see, the "average of" gives room for other interpretations. The "up to" version seems somewhat more modest than the average burn rate, but there are other possible interpretations as well.

First timers, for example, could be intimidated by the "fact" that the average burn rate during the class should be around 560 calories, as the number conveys an image of a very intensive workout. A person in reduced condition might feel uncertain of his abilities to complete the class. On one hand, a new participant might not be able to perform the exercise according to his best abilities on his first time due to the lack of knowledge of the

movements, techniques and proper weights. Therefore, the calorie burn rate might be reduced accordingly and the consumer left unsatisfied with his and/or the class's performance. On the other hand, a beginner might see the average burn rate as a motivating promise of progress: do BODYPUMP regularly, and you'll be able to burn around 560 calories per class.

The downside of the wordplay in burn rate quantification may be in the interpretations of the consumers that already are BODYPUMP customers. Using the word "average" may be interpreted as some sort of a standard that consumers should expect to see when participating a BODYPUMP class. In relation to this, the more subtle expression of "up to" could undermine this interpretation by indicating that 560 calories per hour is not actually an average burn rate at all, but a maximum instead. This may create confusion among regular consumers. On the other hand, the word "average" suggests that the burn rate results may vary around the mean and thus even higher calorie expenditure is accomplishable. This may play in favour of Les Mills, because, as discussed earlier, calorie burn rates vary considerably between people, and a form of quantification that leaves room for fluctuation also leaves room for individual forms of regulating and measuring oneself.

4.4. Real weights and real identities

The third quarter of 2012 moves in a very different direction theme-wise from the previous quarter. Interestingly, while the advertisements in the Q3 2012 set look somewhat similar with one another, they differ in many ways both in the textual and the visual content.

The BODYBALANCE advertisement's headline "Cool, calm, collected" is paired with a combined picture of three women in three different stages of a yoga pose. The women indeed look calm and well-balanced: both by their appearance and their expressions and postures. The headline is supported by a suggestion to feel revitalised with BODYBALANCE. Noteworthy is that whereas the other Q3 2012 ads have the average burn rate mentioned, BODYBALANCE's information box does not include such a value. Moreover, as seen with the dance program advertisements, BODYBALANCE is also suggested to have other than bodily benefits: "enhances mental wellbeing" is listed as a result. Interestingly, all these features construct a claim of BODYBALANCE as a class that emphasizes the psychological benefits of BODYBALANCE over of the physiological advantages – perfectly in line with the BODYBALANCE ad of Q2 of 2008.

The SH'BAM advertisement is quite the opposite of the BODYBALANCE ad, presenting smiling models in dancing positions and even jumping. The headline here makes things interesting: "Be exactly who you want to be" seems to be a deviation of the usual claim of becoming something as a result of participating in a class. However, if the addressee is not really satisfied with herself, the headline could be viewed as a claim suggesting that SH'BAM can make the addressee change into someone she wants to be. In this sense, the rather broad headline could easily result in a narrative interpretation, as the addressee is first challenged to define who she wants to be and then imagine how their life would be as that person.

The BODYPUMP ad takes a narrower approach by making a statement "Real weights, real results, real fast". In fitness culture, this claim addresses several possible counterarguments for both the BODYPUMP brand and exercising as an activity by reproducing the recurring themes in the fitness industry communications (see Smith Maguire 2002, 450-457). First, the promise of fast results persuades the consumers who are looking for instant gratification. Second, real results address the consumers that want

to see progress and see exercising as something that needs to be measured. Third, the promise of real weights can be seen to undermine the quite usual preconception of fitness classes being less intensive than working out at the gym, for example. This, perhaps, is also the reason why the BODYPUMP ad includes more men than women: the mentioned real weights coupled with images of men doing BODYPUMP can both implicate an intensive form of workout and undermine the assumption that "real men" do not participate in group fitness classes.

Defining something as real or unreal is a rather vague form of descriptive quantification. Referring to "real weights" and "real results" may pose a question of the counterparts of these items: what are "unreal weights" and "unreal results"? There seems to be a vague categorization here: BODYPUMP is categorized as good, efficient and trustworthy, as some other forms of moulding the body are categorized as bad and inefficient. This naturally leaves room for a great deal of interpretation and enables the ad to address people on many levels. Someone could, for example, see the headline as a counterargument to modern easy-fix diets that are criticized for not producing real, long-term results, whereas someone else could construe the headline to undermine competing fitness programs.

4.5 Step up to firm up

The third quarterly advertisement set in 2013 again takes the components of the program ads towards a new direction. The headlines of the ads address the consumer with a clear command: the step board workout program BODYSTEP asks people to “Step up to firm up”, BODYATTACK to “Attack your fitness goals”. Each poster presents one model in a background that seems to borrow its visual imagery from web-like elements and electricity.

The BODYSTEP ad quite clearly makes a claim that BODYSTEP makes one’s body firmer. Stepping up has a twofold meaning here. It is sometimes used metaphorically, meaning that someone needs to come forward and take some sort of action. In this sense, the metaphor can be seen to invite addressees into making progress in exercising, taking control over their own fitness, or even starting an exercising routine from the scratch – perhaps then stepping against obesity, immobility or bad health, for example. On this level the metaphor works for multiple audiences. On the other hand, stepping up also describes the movement of stepping on the board during the class, which makes this a vivid expression that conveys both literal and figurative meanings of the phrase.

This BODYSTEP ad’s sub-headline “The ultimate butt and thigh workout” uses descriptive quantification combined with classification. ‘Ultimate’ is a rather vague word: it could be describing the intensity of the class as extreme, or implying the best quality among the different step exercise programs in the market – or perhaps both, depending on individual interpretations. In any case, it is a very powerful way to make a persuasive description. It presents the class as something that is extremely good, but leaves it undefined what are the attributes about the class that actually are extremely good. It is hard to argue against such a claim that uses descriptive quantification in this way: when the word ‘ultimate’ is not well-defined in this context, it is near to impossible to find justification for a counterargument.

A similar idea is repeated in the BODYATTACK poster, which utilizes the word ‘attack’ both in its metaphorical sense and as a part of the branded product name. The metaphorical power of attacking one’s fitness goals derives from the vocabulary of war. Thus, attacking the goals may lead to defeating them, thereby leading to success. The sub-headline borrows from the vocabulary of motoring: as overdrive moves a car faster

than the others, putting the body into a calorie burning overdrive sounds like getting better results, faster. There is a downside to this metaphor, though. The word 'over' is often used to make a negative expression out of a word, which may echo on this metaphor as well. In addition, overdrive in vehicles leads to them wearing out more quickly. Overdrive as a word could thus be interpreted as a negative thing: working out over the body's natural limits may wear the body out, leading to negative results.

Both the BODYATTACK and BODYSTEP advertisements use visual cues that emphasize the health benefits and/or the intensity of the programs. Noticeable cues are the lightning and electricity lines that run along the models bodies. Lightning and electricity are often used metaphors for fast and powerful, and these attributes support the metaphors of attack and overdrive and the quantification as ultimate. However, there is one thing that the BODYATTACK ad, despite of its claims on intensity, lacks: sweat, perhaps the most easily recognisable metaphor for hard physical work. The male model in the BODYSTEP poster is glistening and his shirt also seems to be wet. This makes one wonder whether women as fitness consumers are categorized as either too vain to sweat or unwilling to work hard. Men, on the other hand, are seen as consumers that consider sweating to be an integral part of exercising.

Contrary to the previously analysed ads that utilized multiple people in one ad, the Q3 2013 posters only present one model. Moreover, each poster uses the program's director as a model: Lisa Osborne for BODYATTACK and Mark Nu'u for BODYSTEP. Not only are they modelling for their programs, the ads also include their autograph. It seems like the ads are reproducing the current celebrity consumer culture, in which a famous person is presented alongside a brand, thus transferring his attributes to the advertised product or service. This could be a form of associating the service with an extrinsic person and thus rubbing their value on the advertised brand, but there is one challenge with this method. It is likely that most Les Mills classes' potential (or even current) consumers have never heard of the program directors. There is certainly a big group of die-hard fans that are familiar with the "celebrities" of the Les Mills world, but the average consumer could be left confused by the culturally obvious celebrity theme – without an actual celebrity.

4.6 Breaking restrictions

The RPM ad pairs physical strength with industrial and nature metaphors by headlining the ad “Lungs of steel, legs of carbon”. Steel, as such, is a durable substance that can endure a lot of stretching and pulling without breaking. Stating that lungs are like steel, thus, can be interpreted as to claim physiological benefits of RPM: lungs get strong and durable. A more commonly used metaphor in the fitness world is “abs of steel”, but being familiar with one body part being combined with steel may make it easier for the addressee to make the same interpretation with lungs as well. Carbon, on the other hand, is perhaps best known as a component of fuel. When exposed to extreme pressure, carbon can transform into diamonds. Thus, legs are like fuel, keeping the RPM consumer moving. And if he keeps vigorously moving, perhaps he’ll turn into a diamond – a bright and shinier version of himself – as a result. The carbon metaphor, however, could be a bit harder to interpret, as it is not as common as a metaphor in the fitness culture as steel is. Moreover, most people have become familiar with steel in their everyday life, whereas the features of carbon – mostly used as an ingredient in making other matters – may not be as well known to all.

The BODYATTACK poster uses clever wordplay around the brand’s name in its headline. It draws on the saying “Attack is the best defense”: even though the beginning of the saying has been dropped out, the consumer familiar with the saying quite automatically

completes the sentence. The model is pictured as being tied into some sort of a leash, running away. This emphasizes the headline: by attacking forward, the model is defending herself from her capturer. The leash may resonate with viewers in a metaphorical level. Consumers can see the leash representing something in their life that is holding them back or preventing them from doing something. Attacking those issues by participating in a BODYATTACK class is like self-defense, getting one safely to a better place in her life. More than the RPM ad, the rhetoric in the BODYATTACK advertisement emphasizes the brand: if attack is the best defense, attending just any cardio class won't do.

4.7 Incentives and rewards

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the generic advertisements differ from the quarterly ads as they are not release specific – or even program specific, at times – but are rather advertising the Les Mills brand. These advertisements do not have a well-defined time-span and can thus be used again and again in various situations or, on the other hand, continuously over a long period of time.

Generally, the generic ads consist of fewer components than the quarterly program advertisements. The lack of e.g. program information leaves more room for artistic features, making interpreting the argument perhaps more engaging for the consumer. This might be due to the nature of the generic ads: because the program advertisements are changed frequently and consumers often pay attention to change, the generic ads perhaps need to be more engaging to make people notice them over and over again.

One recurring theme in the generic advertisements is appearance. It is used in various ways: sometimes the reference to the looks is very straightforward, sometimes it is merely implied. A pair of examples are presented below.

The first advertisement makes use of a rather creative metaphor, suggesting that one should get a pair of legs that her shorts want to wear. Shorts as an item do not, of course, want anything. The person wearing shorts, on the other hand, does. Thus, the claim at first seems to be that one should get the kind of legs she wants to show off in shorts. However, this wordplay might actually be a cunning way of making an argument that in its authentic form probably wouldn't be praised by the consumers: one should have attractive legs if one wishes to use shorts. The difference between the claims is in the context. In the first version, the shorts-approved appearance is defined by the consumer individually. The latter, however, implicates that the concept of attractive legs that are suitable for shorts is already defined for them, and the consumers should just comply with it.

If the latter interpretation is chosen, it brings us to another forms of rhetoric: consensus and externalization. The pictorial content of the ad is reproducing a certain kind of appearance as pursuable: toned, even muscular legs with no cellulite or other "defects" that might differ from the idealized image of attractive legs. By turning the shorts into an active subject in the sentence, Les Mills distances itself from the headline. By implying that the current beauty standard is something that "just exists", Les Mills seems to suggest that first of all, there is a common consensus about the standards among consumers and secondly, there is nothing Les Mills can do about these standards. The latter suggestion is a form of covering the brand from counterarguments. Les Mills thus

seems to claim that they are not making the rules, they are just playing by them – and helping consumers do the same.

The second advertisement is perhaps not as blunt appearance-wise, but the point certainly gets made. The ad utilizes the very common expression of 'love handles'; a nickname for the body parts in the sides of the belly and back. It breaks the parts of the expression up and uses them metaphorically: love stands for a romantic relationship, and handles stand for fat.

Regardless of the metaphors, one possible interpretation of the ad could be that the BODYPUMP (the program brand in this particular ad) barbell does not have handles in it, but the class is still great enough to be loved by the consumers. This reading, however, seems rather farfetched – especially as the BODYPUMP plates actually *do* have handles. It seems more possible that this headline is actually presenting an ironizing argument against a commonly known suggestion that a little extra filling in the sides of the human body is a loveable feature. Moreover, the discourse around appearance when it comes to romance is complex: it is culturally regarded rude to admit that the looks affect who one chooses to date or not to date, but on the other hand, in private the appearance of a potential partner is given a lot of value. The claim here seems to actually be that love handles might hurt one's romantic life, and one should thus get rid of them. It is, however, wiser to make this claim in a less straightforward way so that Les Mills does not break the existing cultural requirement of being polite.

Interestingly enough, there is not much rationale in these advertisements to support the claims. Actually, it seems like the argument relies on the preconception that the current fitness culture and discourse have already convinced the consumers. All Les Mills needs to do, then, is to remind them of the benefits of obtaining a generally approved, attractive look. Compared to the quarterly program ads, these two advertisements very explicitly suggest that the benefits of exercising actually lie somewhere else than just in the consumers' health and appearance. The claim and the rationale appear to form a circular argument: this is the way things are, so you should do what we are suggesting, because of the way things are.

Interestingly, these two advertisements seem to do little for Les Mills brand wise, compared to many of the other ads in this study. Neither of the ads emphasizes the benefits of choosing Les Mills: in fact, the first ad discussed doesn't even have much program related imagery in it. However, the arguments of complying with the cultural beauty standards to gain benefits in other aspects of one's life could perhaps be self-relevant enough to trigger consumer-brand identification. In this sense, Les Mills classes would be interpreted as necessary for obtaining those advantages.

4.8 The battle of the better body

In addition to the appearance perspective, a common denominator in many of the generic ads (and some quarterly advertisements, too) is the rhetoric of war and battle, as if the consumption of fitness should be regarded as a must or a duty. Whereas some of the ads appeal to the leisure time exerciser by emphasizing the easiness and the fun factor of fitness, the rhetoric of war is targeted to the consumer who sees – and wants to see – exercising as hard work.

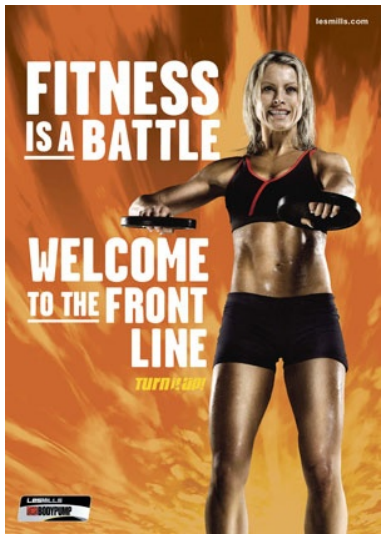
The first advertisement suggests that fitness is like a battle. The opponent, however, is not defined, so the headline leaves room for individual interpretations and thus the

possibility to identify oneself with the ad: whereas one consumer might be battling obesity, another could see his busy lifestyle as the enemy of fitness. The background resembles an almost a hellish fire, which in itself can be seen as a metaphor (as long as no one actually proves the existence of hell and its fiery surroundings) for e.g. pain and suffering that eventually leads to one being purified and reborn.

The invitation to the front line can be seen as an extension to the war metaphor. Attacking one's personal fitness enemy in the frontline means not settling for the status quo but actively taking things into one's own hands. On the other hand, the word 'frontline' might also be a metaphor for Les Mills as a brand: Les Mills classes are like the frontline in a war, courageously making way to the others, being the best of the best. When consumers participate in Les Mills classes, the attributes of the greatest (fitness) warriors rub onto them as well.

The second ad utilizes the war metaphor too, but the approach to the consumer's self is a bit different. The first ad suggests that one's fitness goals are threatened by an enemy that needs to be defeated, thus externalizing the obstacles for being fit. The second ad, on the other hand, refers e.g. to the assets that can be found within the consumer himself. Releasing the inner warrior seems to imply that the addressee's current state on the outside – whether that's his health, appearance, confidence, self-image etc. – does not reflect him on the inside. Thus, there's the inner self that needs to be freed. The visual content reinforces this claim by presenting an army-like group of people consisting of one and the same person. The one in the front is the only one pictured in lifelike colours; the ones in the back are blended into the background. It looks like the figures in the back could be representing the old versions of the self, who by fighting to be fit are transforming the Les Mills class participant into the full version of himself.

There is, however, an interesting deviation to the usage of war and battle rhetoric in the ads: the way female models in similar ads are used. In two ads with headlines welcoming consumers to the frontline of battle, the background imagery remains similar to the ads with male models, but the facial expressions are notably different.



The smiling models combined with the headline and surrounding visuals seem to create a whole different meaning for 'battle' and 'front line'. The first picture's background now actually looks more like a combination of fireworks and rays of light, which in turn creates an image of the smiling model being a superstar, enjoying her moment in the spotlights. In the latter image, the smile indicates that the fiery background isn't something to be afraid of but rather enjoy. In fact, the flames could be a pictorial reference to the common usage of the word 'burn' in the context of exercising: participants are encouraged to "feel the burn" and they are "burning calories". The usage of the word 'burn' in this sense is, of course, a metaphor in itself, as calories and people do not burst out in flames in reality while exercising.

What makes these differences between these two seemingly similar ad sets so intriguing is the way women and men are constructed differently. Men are obviously categorized as consumers that respond well to the war theme, with attributes such as courage and strength. Women, on the other hand, are presented as consumers that don't lose their smile (or their good looks) even when faced with physical challenges. In fact, the women actually look more like they are performing, not battling. This would comply perfectly with the findings of Smith Maguire (2002), suggesting that fitness can be seen either as laborious or entertaining.

5 Recreating consumers – Conclusions of the analyzed advertisements

Even though the physiological changes in the body can be measured, each consumer has their individual goals for exercising that reside outside the domain of the physical body (cf Smith Maguire 2006, 119). As both Vargo and Lusch (2004, 328-330) and Grönroos (2011, 282) note, the value creation process and timespan of a service is defined individually by each consumer, and this couldn't be more true than in the case of branded group fitness classes. Operating in a global context, Les Mills faces a myriad of expectations consumers pose both on their own bodies and the brands that help them mold them.

In the beginning of the study I gave myself two goals:

1. What kind of rhetoric is used to persuade consumers to attend Les Mills group fitness classes?

2. How might these methods work in the context of brand building, i.e. positioning the Les Mills brand as superior to other standardized group fitness class brands?

During the course of the study I noticed that the rhetorical methods used in the advertisements indeed seemed to fall into two categories: one that emphasized the benefits of exercising and one that emphasized the benefits of attending specifically a Les Mills class. The former methods were generic enough to advertise basically any form of exercising – not just Les Mills classes. In most of the advertisements, however, elements that emphasized the superiority of the Les Mills branded classes were intertwined with other rhetorical methods, so that the general interpretation of the ads most likely would lead the consumer to combine the claims with the brand, not just any type of exercise.

When looking at the rhetorical devices of the ads in the analysis, certain recurring themes stand out. Specific forms of rhetoric are used significantly often: metaphors, quantification, categorization and consensus and narratives. Moreover, the arguments

consistently revolve around the recurring themes of fitness presented by Smith Maguire (2002, 450-457): fitness is seen either as laborious or a fun activity, as a lifestyle choice, a source for calculable rewards or as a motivational dilemma. Because the division made by Smith Maguire is essentially about the motives people have for exercising, this finding is closely linked with the research questions of motivation towards exercising and the Les Mills brand. Therefore, in the following section I will discuss these central rhetoric themes and their resonance with the previous literature and the fitness discourse.

5.1 Metaphors as attention grabbers and indirect argumentation

The vivid use of metaphors is perhaps the most notable feature in the whole set of the studied Les Mills advertisements. Every ad in the set contained visual or verbal metaphors and many of them combined the two, forming multimodal metaphors.

The extensive use of both visual and verbal metaphors can be a result of several factors. First of all, as McQuarrie and Phillips (2005) point out, metaphorical claims in advertisements encourage consumers to make distinct, positive interpretations of the advertised brand while still being able to convey the main message of the ad. While verbal metaphors are like invitations to elaborate their claim, visual metaphors evoke the elaboration process more automatically, thus increasing the probability of the ad being noticed at all. (McQuarrie & Phillips 2005, 17-18.) Therefore, it seems like a good strategy to pack the advertisements with vivid and ample metaphors: the more the consumers notice and process the Les Mills ads, the more exposure (and thus conspicuousness) they get for their brand.

Secondly, as metaphors are actually indirect claims because they present the claims in a figurative way rather than literally, the message is not stated outright but only implied (Mothersbaugh, Huhmann & Franke 2002, 590; McQuarrie & Phillips, 2005, 8). This might be fruitful when the same Les Mills ads are trying to convey multiple meanings to different types of consumers, e.g. both fitness beginners and regular customers. While the main message is the same, the figurative form leaves room for some individual reading, based on the attributes of fitness and exercising that are important to each consumer individually. Moreover, as the ads represent the culturally constructed norms

of being fit, using metaphors can be a way of distancing Les Mills from the sources of such norms – and thus shielding itself from possible counterarguments. In other words, throughout the ad set it is implied that this is the cultural norm of being fit and Les Mills cannot help it – but it can help one in achieving the cultural ideal.

When looking at the big picture the analyzed advertisements form, the metaphors seem to present fitness either as hard work or a fun pastime activity, thus representing the two contradicting views on physical exercise (see Smith Maguire 2002, 450-455). Roughly a half of the advertisements included either visual or verbal cues (or both) which indicated that participating in a Les Mills class is easy or fun (or both). Similarly, the other half of the ads used graphics and language to suggest a laborious workout. Interestingly, there were clear differences between the programs. More often than not, the dance and yoga based classes' ads resided in the territory of leisure, whereas the e.g. the barbell and cardio classes were constructed as hard work. Another point to consider is the division between genders. While it is not as clear in the program advertisements, the generic advertisements seem to soften the image of hard work when the model is female. All the generic ads with women in them clearly show metaphorical signs of exercise as a laborious activity: sweat, tensed muscles and partly even the fiery backgrounds. Still the women remain smiling and seemingly energetic. Similar visual cues are not seen in ads that present male models. Therefore, Les Mills sort of seems to wish to identify both with the fun-seeking consumer and the laborious exerciser by juxtaposing their brand with both leisure and work.

5.2 Categorizing to convey consensus

One significant thing that is identical throughout the material is the way the body is presented. Whether the advertisement is targeted for beginners or fitness enthusiasts, the look of the model(s) always represents the culturally defined beauty standard. Women and men are divided into two categories, each with gender specifically defined attributes for appearance. The female models are slender and toned, while the male

models look muscular and extremely athletic. The body compositions vary between ads, but only in the limits of what is categorically acceptable for each gender.

What is not seen in the Les Mills advertisements is an overweight person, or a thin one with no apparent muscle tissue. The analyzed advertisements also lack models of different ages. To be more precise, older models are nowhere to be seen. This is a form of categorizing being fit and beautiful as well: looking young is good, looking old is bad. This could, of course, result in older people making a negative interpretation of the advertisements. However, as the admiration of young age is something that is constantly reproduced in our current culture, Les Mills can rely on the general consensus. This, once again, is something that "just is".

The reason behind this is most likely in the current cultural stereotypical body ideals for men and women, which are constantly being represented in different media. As Duncan and Klos (2014, 246) point out, the advertisements need to provoke dissatisfaction towards the consumer's own body to generate profits for the company. Should Les Mills present models that deviate from the body ideal, this perhaps wouldn't be the case anymore. To engage people in participating Les Mills classes, the ads need to evoke a discrepancy between the consumer's perceived body and the ideal body. An individual consumer can, of course, disregard this discrepancy, but the society around her will not, as e.g. Dworkin & Wachs (2009, 12) and Smith Maguire (2006, 199) have noted. One's appearance is culturally linked with one's overall success in life and the body is a metaphor of one's moral values. Disregarding the discrepancy would thus result in the surrounding society in construing one's image for them – and not a positive one.

This, then again, brings us to fitness as motivational dilemma (see Smith Maguire 2002, 459-461). Because achieving results takes time, the consumers need to be motivated to stick with exercising even after they've been persuaded to try it once. Continuously displaying images of ideally formed bodies and thus reminding them of the need to rework their own is perhaps a good reminder for consumers to keep attending the classes. On the other hand, the cultural link between physical fitness and overall success also seems to be utilized in the ads. Suggesting that by attending a Les Mills class consumers can improve their quality of life – by providing them with a better love life, for

example – could be a powerful motivational message even to those who are not affected merely by body ideals.

Despite of the fact that men and women culturally nowadays face the same enemy – fat, that is – and fitness discourse is starting to present both genders equally as objects (Dworkin & Wachs 2009, 33-34), the Les Mills ads still seem to be making some distinctions beyond the ideal body between the two sexes. More often than not, the male models in the sample ads were pictured as sweaty, heavily concentrated and even with facial expressions that indicate participation in laborious action. The women, on the other hand, are presented as happy or calm – and less frequently sweaty than men. This seems to be in line with the two main discourses of the current health ideology: either obtaining the desired results by hard work and self-discipline or by consuming things that help you achieve those results in a fun way on your leisure time (Machado Gomes 2010, 92; Smith Maguire 2002, 459-461). It seems that Les Mills ads often categorize men into the first group of exercisers whereas women reside on the side of fun and leisure.

The interesting thing in these categorizations is the way the Les Mills ads present them as being natural and pre-defined. The ideal body is not really even emphasized – it is just there. The expectations of men preferring hard workouts is not explained – it's just something that is. This sort of argumentation is de-emphasizing the role of Les Mills as an active party in reproducing these categories. In fact, there is an unutterable “we” here; a consensus over the body ideals and gendered preferences that “we” all share. Les Mills is merely informing consumers of the current body standards and offering them a way to achieve them through practices that culturally fit their gender. (Cf Potter 1996, 156.) On the other hand, despite the rather common consensus over the beauty standards, the current body ideals and gendered practices have received a quite notable amount of criticism in the recent years. By referring to shared understandings of many, Les Mills might be able to shield itself from opposing arguments, criticizing the gendered and idealized body images: it is not making the rules, it is just playing by them.

5.3 Quantifying the body to measure and reward

The amount of quantification in the chosen set of Les Mills ads experienced a quite notable shift from quantifying even the seemingly unquantifiable attributes to only making use of almost metaphorical descriptive quantification. Whereas the first program ads in the studied set contained nearly no quantification at all – just the program's running number – the following program advertisements made full use of both numerical and descriptive quantification. But come the quarterly ads of year 2013 and the quantification has decreased to rather vague descriptive expressions, such as "overdrive" and "ultimate", written in a rather small font size at the bottom of the poster.

Notable is that the one form of numerical quantification that used to be present in all the program advertisements, the running number of the program, had disappeared in the last set of quarterly ads. What makes this interesting is the fact that the running number was one way of establishing the Les Mills brand without explicitly stating the benefit of preferring the brand. As the running numbers kept on climbing up, they would indicate that the programs and thus the brand have been around for years, perhaps thereby categorizing Les Mills as an expert in the field of group fitness. However, as the removing of the running numbers occurred shortly after many other group fitness brands were starting to spread globally, one can only wonder whether the quantification of the number of the releases was actually starting to backfire. Another interpretation of a high running number might namely be that as the brand has been doing this for so long, the classes aren’t fresh and trendy anymore.

As discussed in the analysis chapter, the numerical quantification of e.g. calorie expenditure may pose problems when the intended audience includes consumers with very diverse backgrounds. Perhaps this is the reason behind the switch from very specific numerical information to descriptive quantification. On the other hand, emphasizing attributes that are hard to deny – like the definition of "ultimate" – can be beneficial for Les Mills brand wise. While exact numbers may (or may not, as noted before) serve consumers that are keen on monitoring their performance, moving towards the narrative, even "magical" end of the advertising continuum (Huisman 2005, 286) can better transport the Les Mills brand's value into the consumer's life. And in terms of "magical",

mere numbers based on science can probably never live up to descriptions such as "ultimate".

Quantification can, quite obviously, be a source for calculable rewards for exercisers – one of the key themes in the fitness industry's discourse (see Smith Maguire 2002, 456-457). The forms of numerical quantification, e.g. the calorie expenditure and the duration of the class, fit quite nicely in the concept of measuring one's performance and achievements. But as the forms of numerical quantification diminished, the mere vague descriptive quantifications no longer provided baselines for such measuring. The metaphors and narratives of improved overall quality of life still could generate a comparable resource for calculable rewards, but descriptions such as "ultimate" and "real" may be so nonspecific that it would be hard for consumers to compare themselves against those attributes. Therefore, it might be that the change from numerical to descriptive quantification is also a shift towards solving the motivational dilemma. As Smith Maguire (2002, 459-461) suggests, motivation can stem from either self-discipline (hard work ideology) or self-reward (leisure ideology). Descriptions such as "ultimate" and "real" may cater for the former, while quantifying certain types of legs as shorts-worthy, for example, could motivate the consumer of the latter group to pursue the reward.

5.4 Narratives of before and after

As Featherstone (2010, 197; 1982; 88) notes, one central theme in consumer fitness culture is the transformation from "before" to "after" – ergo a narrative. Advertising is supposed to encourage consumers to evaluate their own bodies through the lens of the ideal body (Gurrieri et al 2012, 129) – and this is exactly what the Les Mills advertisement's narratives do. A loose narrative structure is present in all of the advertisements, as the pieces of rhetorical devices are put together in a way that allows for the audience to interpret the narrative without Les Mills expressing it explicitly. Combining a concise headline with a suitable image conveys the story of the Les Mills programs helping people achieve their goals – whether it is their fitness goals or some broader ambitions in life.

The power of narratives in the Les Mills advertisements, however, probably lies in identification and narrative transportation. As Cova and Dalli (2009, 322) note, when the consumer re-imagines the narrative in her own context, the consumer actually becomes a producer of the story instead of a mere spectator. Therefore, the Les Mills ads are better off conveying a rather loose narrative that leaves room for individual interpretation. When the narrative in the ads resonates with the consumers, they can picture themselves as the models of the advertisements – but with their own personal touch to the story.

The key benefit from triggering those narrative interpretations could indeed be in getting the consumers to identify with the Les Mills brand. While at first glance one might think that when the consumer places herself in the narrative and pictures her life as the outcome of exercising, the outcome of such advertising would be getting more people to exercise. However, if a brand can help a consumer to satisfy a self-definitional need, the consumer identifies with that brand (Bhattacharya & Sen 2003, 77). In this sense, physical fitness in itself perhaps doesn't have to be a self-definitional need, if the outcomes of being fit are. When the consumer perceives the outcome of a narrative as an important need, the Les Mills brand can then be the necessary source for fulfilling that need.

Within the fitness industry themes, the narratives seem to affiliate with considering fitness to be a lifestyle (see Smith Maguire 2002, 450-454). As this lifestyle is all about self-creation and development, there’s a natural linkage to narrative transportation. Many, if not all of the studied advertisements either imply or even make a promise of better quality of life or some aspect of it as a result of exercising, thus suggesting self-development through developing one’s physical attributes. Viewing the body as a consumer project is also an integral part of the fitness lifestyle and the project is affected by one’s choices in the consumer market. This might also be a beneficial approach brand-wise. Les Mills could use this logic to imply that just any form of exercising will not do, if one wants to complete her fitness project, but Les Mills classes will help her get the results she wants.

6 Final thoughts on the magical formula of branded fitness

While working on this study, many people have asked me about the subject of my thesis. As I have tried to explain the meaning of rhetoric in advertising context and the appeal of the subject in the context of the fitness industry, I have encountered more than a few stunned expressions. Jokingly I have then told them that I'm examining all the cunning ways companies use for luring new customers and keeping current ones from eloping with the competitors. Everyone seemed to understand that. Now, at the end of this process, I am not sure that description was actually too far-fetched.

It still amazes me that the fitness industry has grown to be an oven 70-billion-euro business and it has received relatively very little attention among researchers. Moreover, the standardized group fitness class providers have been able to create a whole new way of licensing a service brand that at first glance would not seem duplicable at all: the consumers have to make all the results for themselves, with a considerable amount of effort. Try selling this concept without telling the consumers what it's all about and most people would definitely say they would not pay for this kind of a self-service. Still, in addition to Les Mills, numerous group fitness class brands are now taking over fitness facilities all over the world. For example, the dance fitness program Zumba is nowadays being taught in 200 000 facilities around the world and Piloxing classes, based on a combination of Pilates and boxing, are offered in 85 countries. With new branded group fitness programs continuously arising, it seems that the popularity of standardized classes is not fading away anytime soon.

As discussed in the first chapter of this study, the Les Mills advertisements were chosen for this analysis because of the diversity in the programs Les Mills offers, the amount of different types of advertisements during a five-year time period and the popularity of the brand. An interesting aspect for further study, however, would be to compare advertisements of some of the leading brands. As far as I can tell by personal experience, the diversity among e.g. different Zumba advertisements is not very notable, but

comparing several brands might illuminate whether there are differences in how the brands see their potential consumers and how they communicate their superiority to these audiences.

In relation to the massive growth of the standardized group fitness industry, this thesis is just a cursory study of the ways one company has used to communicate the value of its services and its brand. Many of my findings were complexed: while the intended argument of the advertisements was rather clear, there could be multiple other interpretations as well, some favorable for the brand, some not so much. Consequently, one natural continuum for this study would be to research the consumers' actual interpretations of the advertisements and compare them with my findings. Judging by the success of e.g. Les Mills and Zumba, it seems that there is a magical formula for distributing fitness brand value, but discovering it would most certainly require some serious consumer research.

On the other hand, as the cultural ideals of beauty, body and their effect on other aspects of people's lives seem to be continuously in motion, perhaps a more relevant subject would be to determine what sorts of arguments would actually be relevant to consumers in the near future. It is possible that the preferences of today are gone tomorrow and brands need to be able to evolve accordingly. The final set of program ads in this study may even have given a hint towards possible new trends in group fitness advertising: the models were not representing the gendered, normative ideal looks as clearly as previously. It might have been a short-lived fad or a test of how consumers might react to slightly different type of imagery. Nevertheless, merely complying with the current "given" standards and representing them might not be enough to distinguish a brand from the others in the long run. Thus it could be worthwhile for brands to seek alternate ways of attracting consumers' attention.

Lastly, it is noteworthy that there are still millions of people globally who do not exercise at all, even if they had the means to do so. As Smith Maguire (2002, 459-461) notes, one of the central themes of the fitness discourse is the motivational dilemma: how does one motivate herself to exercise. It seems rather evident that the current fitness discourse motivational factors, self-discipline or self-reward, have failed to engage a big part of the

population globally. Psychological studies have examined reasons behind this and research on the health issues of not exercising is extensive, but it seems that most fitness companies have given up on them. However, from a pure business perspective, the non-exercising people still form a very large group of potential consumers – thus making their views on the current body ideal and the consumption of fitness related services a fruitful approach for further research.

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